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STRETTON.

A Novel.

BY

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ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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STRETTON.

CHAPTER I.

DOES Nature sympathize with disaster? Of all poets' fancies, that is the most foolish. Is "the wind to be howling in turret and tree" whenever disaster, and sin, and terror are walking abroad? We should have fine weather, I trow, were that the case.

The crystal purity of a perfect evening at the end of April was settling down over the beautiful valley which lies between Shrewsbury and Ludlow; on the one hand, the Longmynd rolled its great sheets of grouse-moor and scarps of rock up, fold beyond fold; while, on the other, the sharp peak of Caradoc took the evening, and smiled upon his distant brother, the towering Plinlimmon; while Plinlimmon, in the West, with silver infant Severn streaming down his bosom, watched the sinking sun after

Caradoc and Longmynd had lost it ; and when it sank, blazed out from his summit a signal to his brother watchers, and, wrapping himself in purple robes, slept in majestic peace.

Down below in the valley, among the meadows, the lanes, and the fords, it was nearly as peaceful and quiet as it was aloft on the mountain-tops ; and under the darkening shadows of the rapidly leafing elms, you could hear, it was so still, the cows grazing and the trout rising in the river. Day was yet alive in some region aloft in the air, loftier than the summits of Plinlimmon or Caradoc, for the democratic multitude of the stars had not been able as yet to show themselves through the train of glorious memories which the abdicated king had left behind him. The curfew came booming up the valley sleepily, and ceased. It was a land lapped in order and tradition ; good landlords, good tenants, well-used labourers, if ever there were such in late years in England. Surely a land of peace !

Who comes here, along the path, through the growing clover ? Who is this woman who walks swiftly, bareheaded under the dew ? Who is this

strange-looking woman, with an Indian shawl half-fallen off her shoulders, with clenched fists, one of which she at times beats on her beautiful head? Can it be Mrs. Evans, of the Castle, or her ghost? Or is it her in the flesh, and has she gone mad?

Such were the questions put to one another by a young pair of lovers, who watched her from beneath a plantation where they were innocently rambling. The young man said, "That is a queer sight for a fellow courting," and the young woman said, "There was too much love-making there, I doubt." And the young man said, "How about the banns next Sunday?" And the young woman said, "Have your own way about it, and don't plague me," which I suppose, meant "Yes."

We must follow this awful, swift-walking figure of poor Mrs. Evans, and watch her.

She was an exceedingly beautiful woman, in exact age forty-one, with that imperial dome-like head, and splendid carriage of that same head, which the Merionethshire people say is a *specialité* of the Merediths, though I have seen it elsewhere. If you had told her that she had

Celtic blood in her veins, she would probably have denied it ; but she was certainly behaving in a most Celtic manner now. Anything more un-Norman than her behaviour now, cannot be conceived. The low, inarticulate moans—the moans which mean so much more than speech—the wild, swift walk, the gesticulation, the clenched fists, all told of Celtic excitability ; yet she was no Celt. It is only the old, stale story of *Hibernis ipsis Hiberniores*. She was behaving like a Celt because she had been brought up among them ; but there was a depth of anger and fury in her heart which must have come from the conquering race.

As she neared her husband's castle, she grew more calm, adjusted her shawl, and put her hair straight ; for she feared him, gentle as he was. He would have lain down so that she should walk over him ; but he would have been angry with her had he seen her in her late disorder. And she had never seen his wrath but once, and that was towards his own son ; and she did not care to face it, for it was as deep and passionate as his love. So she bound up her

hair, left off clenching her fists, pulled her shawl straight, and, stepping in by the flower-garden, let herself in by the postern, and appeared before him, as he stalked up and down the library.

“Is it over, darling of my heart?” he said.

“It is all over,” she said, spreading her ten white fingers before her.

“And how is she?” he asked.

“She is dead!” answered Mrs. Evans.

“Dead! dead! dead!” she was going on hysterically, when he caught her in his arms and kissed her into quiescence.

“Be quiet,” he said; “there is trouble enough without more. What have we done that God should afflict us like this? Is the child alive?”

“Yes; but it cannot live,” replied Mrs. Evans. “It is a weak thing: but God forgive us, there is no doubt about its father.”

In the house of Evans, the qualities of valour in war, of faith to the death with friends, and of strict probity towards the women of the estate, were always considered

to be hereditary—more especially the last quality. The servants in the family were always taken from some family resident in the 11,000 acres which made the estate. Such of them as were traditionally supposed to require the quality of good looks, the ladies'-maids and the pad-grooms, were always selected from three or four families notorious for those qualities. Again, even in such a strong family as the Evanses, nurses were often required, and were selected always, if possible, from one of those three or four families: so that, in fact, most of the servants, male and female, were actual foster-brothers of some one member of the house. The idea of any wrong was actually incredible; but it had come, and there was wild weeping over it.

The prettiest girl of all these good-looking families had been the very last admitted into the Castle, as companion and lady's-maid to that splendid beauty, Eleanor Evans. Admitted, do I say? She had been admitted when she was a wailing infant of a week old, as foster-sister to the equally wailing Eleanor; for Mrs. Evans had not been so lucky as usual,

and had kept about a little too long. Elsie grew up almost as much at Stretton as she did at her own cottage, and had been as free of the Castle as was her foster-sister Eleanor.

Perhaps, because she had had only one nurse while Eleanor had two—who can say? she grew up very delicate and small, though very beautiful. Eleanor (I was going to say Aunt Eleanor, but must not as yet) grew up so physically strong that the wiser old ladies, after looking at her through their spectacles, pronounced that she was very splendid, but would get coarse. We shall see about that hereafter.

It was on the eve of Waterloo that the gentle little maid was fully accredited for the first time to her full powers of being thoroughly bullied by Eleanor. “Now, you little fool, I have got you, body and bones,” said Eleanor, when they went up-stairs together, “and I’ll make you wish you were dead in a week;” which made the little maid laugh, and yet cry; upon which great Eleanor bent down over her and kissed her. “What is the matter with you, you little idiot?” she said. “You want

bullying, and you shall be bullied. Come, up, and take my hair down." And the little maid did as she told her.

"Set all the doors open," said Eleanor, "that I may walk to the end of the corridor and back. A dog would not sleep to-night. Oh, Charles! brother of my heart, acquit thyself well! My father and mother are praying for the heir of the house, but I—I, girl, cannot pray! Why are you weeping, girl?"

"I was thinking of Master Charles and the battle, miss."

"What is he to you? How dare you cry while I am dry-eyed! Idiot! Good Duke! Good Duke! Tarre! He should wait behind Soignies for Blucher; but he knows. In front of Soignies there are open downs. Child, why do you weep? Is it for your brothers, who have followed mine? I do not weep for *my* brother ——"

Yes, but she did though. Broke down all in one instant, while the words were yet in her mouth. But it was soon over. She was soon after walking up and down the corridor, with her hair down, speculating on the chances of the war.

Late at night she came to her father and mother's bedroom. They had not gone to bed, but sat waiting for news, which could not possibly come for a week. "Mother," she said, "I can do nothing with my poor little maid. She has got hysterical about her two brothers at the war, and keeps accusing poor Charles, who, I am sure, never tempted them."

"What?" said Mrs. Evans, sharply.

"Keeps on accusing Charles, in the most senseless manner. I am sure ——"

"Go and sit with your father," said Mrs. Evans. "Engage his attention; keep him amused. I'll see to the girl."

She went and saw to the girl; but took uncommonly good care that no one else did. She was an hour with her. When she came back to her husband's bedroom she found Eleanor sitting up, with a map of Belgium before her, chatting comfortably, but solemnly, about the movements of the armies.

She had seen the girl, she said; and the girl was hysterical about her brothers, and accused Charles of leading them to the war. The girl was weak in her health, and would be always weak.

The girl had always been a fool, and apparently intended to remain one. The girl must have change of air and scene. She had an aunt at Carlisle, who kept a stationer's shop. The girl must go there for a time ; for there was trouble enough without *her* tantrums. Charles, with his furious, headlong way of doing things, was almost certainly killed, &c., &c., with a sly, kind eye on her husband and her daughter.

They both were on her in a moment, at such a supposition. She, when she saw that she had led them on the wrong scent, recovered her good temper, and allowed them to beat her from pillar to post, while they proved that the allies would carry everything before them, and that nothing could happen to Charles (except accidents of war, which are apt to be numerous). Yet, complacent as she was, there were times when her hands caught together and pulled one another, as though the right hand would have pulled the fingers up by the roots. These were the times when she was saying to herself, about her own darling son, "He had better die there! he had better die there!"

For the rest nothing was to be noted in this

lady's behaviour for the present, save that the new lady's-maid was sent to Carlisle, that Mrs. Evans seemed to take the news of Waterloo rather coolly, and that she received her son, now Captain Evans, with extreme coolness on his return from Waterloo, covered with wounds and glory.

She thought him guilty. Why should she say to him, "Honourable conduct is of more avail than glory?" He was chilled and offended, for he felt himself innocent.

What was he like at this time? For the present we must take his sister Eleanor's account of him, who says that he was the very image of his son, Roland,—which must be very satisfactory to the reader. The ladies may like to know, however, by the same authority, that if my friend, Eleanor, is right, and that Charles Evans was like his son Roland, that he was also, by the same authority, extremely like Antinous.

Antinous Charles had been brought up with this poor, pretty little maid, Elsie, and he had fallen in love with her, and she with him,

which was against the rules of the house of Evans, for she was foster-sister of *his* sister. They loved like others. In what followed, Charles's own mother was against him, and gave him up as a villain who had transgressed the immutable traditions of the house. One of the girl's brothers was killed at Waterloo, one came home with Charles, as his regimental servant. Charles gave out that he was going to London; but his silly servant came home to Stretton and vaguely let out the fact that Captain Charles had not been to London at all, but had been to Carlisle to see his sister, Elsie.

Mr. Evans's fury was terrible. He wrote in a friendly way to the colonel of Charles's regiment, begging him, as an old friend, to recall Charles instantly, and save him from what he feared was a very low intrigue. He sent old Mrs. Gray, the girl's mother, off to Carlisle after her daughter at once, bearing such a letter as made Charles avoid home in returning to Chatham, at the peremptory summons of his commanding officer.

Let us say but little about it, as it is not

among such painful scenes as this that we shall have to walk together. Charles had not been very long at Carlisle, but he had been too long it seemed. The unhappy girl came home, and was confined in six months' time. She died that night, but the child lingered on, and on.

Did Mrs. Evans wish that it should die? Who can say? Did she wish the disgrace buried and ended? Who can say? I think, however, that she slept none the worse after Mrs. Gray came to her and told her that the child was dead.

It had been baptized, and so was buried and registered—the illegitimate son of Elsie Gray; the sexton patted down the turf, and all the scandal was over and done. Old James Evans said that Charles was now free for a new start, and had better go to India on his roster, and had better not come home first. And so a pale and rather wild-looking young captain paraded his company on the main-deck of the East India Company's ship, *The Veda*, and sailed for India accordingly.

“Taking things rather coolly,” you say. Why no, but somewhat hotly: yet submitting.

This young fellow of a captain had violated every traditional rule of his house, and felt guilty. Yet he was not without sources of information. He dared not face his family in the state of things as they were ; and he dared not see the woman he loved best in the world. He consoled himself and her by passionate, wild, foolish letters, carefully transmitted, and carefully and tenderly answered, not only to poor Elsie, but also to his sister Eleanor, whom we shall see again. When unhappy affairs of this kind take place, there are apt to be domestic scenes. I will give you one.

At breakfast, one bright May morning, some two months before the child so soon to die was born, Eleanor had a letter, and was reading it. Her mother looked at her father, and her father looked at her mother, and at last her father, Squire James Evans, spoke.

“My dear Eleanor you have a letter from your brother Charles. Will you let me read it?”

“No, I won’t,” said Eleanor.

“Is that the way to speak to your father?” said Mrs. Evans.

“Yes,” said Eleanor, “if he proposes to read letters which are not directed to him. The letter is from Charles to me; if he had intended to let my father see it, he would have directed it to him. He, on the other hand, has directed it to me, and I mean to keep it to myself.”

Mrs. Evans wept.

Squire Evans said, “This is well. My son has been a villain, and my daughter backs him up.”

“You do ill to call your son a villain, sir,” replied Aunt Eleanor. “Call him fool and coward; but you do ill, you two, to call him villain.” And so Aunt Eleanor, then, by the way, a very beautiful young girl of eighteen, takes up her letter, and scornfully sweeps out of the room, with her nose in the air. Fine times indeed!

Poor Elsie Gray was with her mother, as we said, and that devoted woman had more than one trouble on her hands at a time. It turned out now that young Robert Gray, the soldier-servant of Charles, had quietly, without leave of his commandant, without the slightest

means of supporting her, married a pretty girl two parishes off, and now wrote coolly to his mother from Chatham to announce the fact, and inform his mother that the young lady would come to her for her confinement.

This child, as Mrs. Gray could tell, was born at the same time, or nearly, as the other. And the soldier's child lived, while the child of his master died. Little Gray grew up, and grew strong. And we shall have to see a great deal of him in many positions. It was about three weeks after, Mrs. Evans came wringing her hands through the green lanes, lamenting the dishonour of her husband's house and her own, that the other little child wailed itself into silence, into peace, into death, and was heard of no more.

CHAPTER II.

WAS Mrs. Evans sorry? Who can say? Those Merediths and Ap-Merediths, who call themselves Celtic, yet are as Norse as they can look at you out of their two eyes, have a singularly un-Celtic trick of concealing emotion. Eleanor could not say whether her mother was sorry or glad.

It was not the custom, in families of that class, for the mother to allude, even in the most distant way, to her daughters on any points regarding marriage relations. Mrs. Evans broke through this rule once, and when her daughter and she were alone, said, very quietly, "That child of Gray, the soldier's, is growing strong and hearty. You are old enough to understand that if things had gone right, that child would have called you aunt. His father is the brother of the woman whom you

should have called sister, had it not been for the incalculable villany of Charles."

"Mother, leave Charles alone. I will not have Charles abused."

"A most maidenly, daughterly speech," said Mrs. Evans, scornfully.

"Mother, I mean all duty; but circumstances alter cases."

"This is well," said Mrs. Evans. "This is uncommonly well. There is some old cross of the Evans blood coming out here. This is the Duchess of N——'s blood, I doubt, which is now defying her own flesh and blood."

"Don't talk like that, mother."

"I will not," replied Mrs. Evans; "but allow me to tell you that if Lord Homerton had heard you utter such atrocious sentiments, he would at once cease his visits, and would not propose."

"Oh, he has proposed," said Eleanor. "He proposed yesterday."

"What did he say?" said Mrs. Evans, eagerly.

"Well," said Eleanor, coolly, "he merely, as I believe men do (and dreadful fools they

look when they do it), asked me if he might consider himself engaged to be married to me?"

"And what did you say?" asked Mrs. Evans.

"I said that I was at a loss to conceive what he had seen in my conduct which induced him to take such an unwarrantable liberty."

"Good heavens!" said Mrs. Evans. "Then are you off with him?"

"I never was on with him that I know of," said Eleanor. "He is a good fellow, and I like him well; but I don't see why I should marry him. We shouldn't get on. He is not religious, and does not care for his estate."

"Your influence would have made him care for both his estate and his religion," said Mrs. Evans.

"Not a bit of it," replied Eleanor. "George is a man, although we never hit it off together."

"Is it hopeless?" said Mrs. Evans. "How did you dismiss him?"

"Well, I kissed him, and as he went out of the room, I gave him a pat on the back, and I said, 'Go on, George; go off to Greenwood.'

There is a girl there, worth fifty of me, who is dying for you. You would never have made such a fool of yourself about me, if it had not been for our two families.' And then he wanted to kiss me again, but I would not stand that. And so he rode off to Greenwood, and I think you will find that Laura Mostyn will be announced as Lady Homerton next week."

"You will never be married, at this rate," said Mrs. Evans, biting her lip.

"Never mean to make such a fool of myself," replied Eleanor.

"A woman must marry to get position and station," said Mrs. Evans, looking keenly, and in a puzzled manner, on this radiant young beauty of eighteen.

"I have both," said Eleanor. "I have the Pulverbatch Farm, and that will bring me in £500 a year, and take up all my time. I tell you that I don't choose to have any husband but one, and he is my brother Charles. Let us drop this perfectly vain conversation, and tell me what you want done about this child."

Mrs. Evans was beaten by that inexorable,

beautiful face. She said, after a pause, "I wish you quietly to be godmother to it, and when I am dead, to look to it. We have done evil enough to that family as it is."

"Is it to be brought up as a gentleman?" she asked.

"Certainly not," said her mother; "only respectably. I wish you would undertake it for me, for the sight of the child and of the whole of that family is distasteful to me."

Eleanor said, "Yes," wondering. But when she said yes she meant yes, and she did what was desired of her.

CHAPTER III.

THE sudden and very lamentable death of Squire James Evans in the hunting-field threw a gloom, not in the mere newspaper acceptance of the term, but in reality, over that part of Shropshire, for nearly a week. He was a most deservedly popular man, and what they wrote on his tomb was every word of it true. He *was* a good son, a good husband, a good father, a good landlord, a pious churchman, a firm friend, and he died without one single enemy. One little fact was omitted from his tombstone : he died without being reconciled to his son, at least formally. There may have been a reconciliation at heart, and those low, inarticulate moans, as he lay dying in his groom's arms in the ditch, may have been the attempted expression of it; but

the mouth was loose in death before they were ever uttered.

Mrs. Evans was not long after him. She was aged and worried, and she moped and brooded until she died. The old clergyman who attended her at the last, left her at the very last with a dissatisfied and rather puzzled face. Eleanor she would not see for the last four days.

Well, she died. And it took nearly six months to communicate to Squire Charles his most sudden and unexpected succession. He came home at the end of a year, and found Eleanor, his sister, in possession, keeping all things square for him: receiving rents, bullying attorneys, walking up and down among the farms, in a dress which was considered remarkable even in those times, and attending to the wants of the tenants. She had practically given one of the family livings away, quite illegally, though the young curate to whom she gave it, took possession, as a matter of course. On the other hand, she had been rather tight with the tenants on the subject of repairs; and, it is reported, used the word "humbug,"

just then coming into fashion, on more than one occasion. They tell an idle tale, those Shropshire folks. They say that she and the steward were standing together on the terrace, when Sir Charles rode up, on his arrival from India ; that the steward said, " Thank heaven. he has come at last." And that Aunt Eleanor said, " I quite agree. Now you and he take the estates in hand, for I am sick of it. And a nice mess you will make of it together, you two."

They did nothing of the kind, however. The property did rather better under the more liberal rule of Squire Charles than under the near and close rule of his sister, Eleanor. Women are apt to be very near and mean in business. They will *give* as few men will *give*, but they will haggle about sixpence, while they are irritating a good tenant. Was not the Antiquary, as near a man as another, upbraided by his usually submissive womankind for " raising the price of fish on them " ?

Eleanor the beautiful whiffed away from her brother's establishment at once, leaving him to manage his somewhat irritated tenants, and

retired to her own farm at Pulverbateh. She marched off with her young child Gray.

The scandal about Charles Evans and Elsie Gray was known to very few persons, and was now almost forgotten even by those few : scarcely half a dozen all told. As for the county, they had never heard of it, and even if they had, would have taken small note of it, for there were plenty of scandals of the same kind in any one of *their* families. If it had got wind, the more ill-natured of them would have been pleased at such a fiasco occurring in such a saint-like family as the Evanses. But then it never did get wind, and Charles Evans was welcomed to his ancestral halls by the county generally, with lute, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all manner of musical instruments. He lied a little, I doubt, at the very first reception, for on being inquired of by the county, where was his sister Eleanor, he replied, that she was not well, and having been overpowered by his sudden return, had gone home to her farm at Pulverbateh ; whereas, the truth was that she was perfectly well, and had told him the day before that she was not

in sufficient temper to meet all these idiots, and walked off to Pulverbatch, promising to come back to him as soon as he had got rid of his fools.

Yet they had had a pleasant meeting these two: worth giving perhaps. He took her in his arms, and she wound her fingers in his hair. And he said—

“Love all the same, sister?”

And she said: “Not all the same, but more.”

“Has anybody been?” said the brother.

“I should like to see them,” said the sister. “My dear, I must marry you. No other arrangement is possible. Get rid of these fools, and find yourself a good wife, and I will come back and marry the pair of you.”

“But who is to marry you?” said the brother.

“You,” said the sister.

CHAPTER IV.

It was a long time before Sir Charles married, but at last, when he was five-and-thirty, he married a Miss Meredith, a very distant connection to him by birth, who, as Eleanor said, had been kept by her parents for him, till, like a brown Beurre pear, she was running a chance of being mildewed. Eleanor came to the wedding and signalized herself by utterly routing and defeating a certain Squire Overley, a most estimable man, of great wealth even in Shropshire, who was supposed to be seeking her hand in marriage. She was very civil to him, but refused to speak of anything except medical science and the management of nursing sisterhoods. She beat that estimable young man, and saw that she had done so. "Heigh ho!" she said, as she got into bed.

“ One more goose choked, and another fool married. I’ll be back with my pigs to-morrow. Overley is a good fellow though, and I’ll find him a good wife. I wonder if Charley will let me have that sixty acres that Pilgrim wants to give up. If he don’t I must give up my pigs ; for buy meal, I won’t.” And so the great Shropshire beauty went to her bed and slept the sleep of the just.

Charles’s marriage was one of the most happy ones which ever took place, either in Novel-land or Earth-land. Within a year Roland, whom I hope you will get to like, was born ; and Eleanor was asked to be godmother. She, dating from Pulverbitch, replied that she hated boys, because they were always wanting their ears boxed. She would undertake this part of a godmother’s business with the greatest pleasure, but as a conscientious woman she could not, in this case. She had invested, for her, heavily in old Berkshire pigs, which took up the main of her time, and as a boy’s ears always required to be boxed on the spot to produce the proper effect, she doubted that she could not be always on the spot to

box them, so she declined, and bred pigs, not even coming to the christening.

The next year was born Edward, whom I also hope that you will like. Once more Eleanor was asked to be godmother; once more she refused, but she came to the great christening party, as she did not to the first one. No one, not even her own brother, knew if she was coming or not. A splendid present of plate for the child had arrived from her, but she put in no appearance until just before the second lesson. Then she swept in, splendidly dressed in grey silk, and sat down among the poor folks by the organ.

Old Major Venables said, afterwards, "That woman made a sensation; but don't you think she meant to do it? I tell you that those Evanses mean what they say, and do what they mean, and the deuce can't prevent them. What the deuce Eleanor means, I can't say. But she'll do it."

CHAPTER V.

It soon became evident what she meant to do. Although she protested against any religious responsibility towards Edward, she nevertheless undertook any amount of physical responsibility. She even determined to assist at his education, to attend as far as she could to his diet, and to define and develop his character, which latter part of her programme she accomplished by allowing him to do exactly as he pleased, and giving him everything he asked for. Mr. Evans told her that she would spoil the child. "I want to spoil him," she said. "He wants spoiling. I intend to gain an influence over him by that means, and use it for good. Our young one is a very sensitive and affectionate young one, and must be treated accordingly."

Meanwhile she had fairly done her duty, and her mother's behests towards young Allan Gray, the soldier's son. She had quietly and unostentatiously got him well educated at Ludlow, and at his own request had apprenticed him to a jeweller's in Shrewsbury. She nearly considered herself quit of him; and his distant connection with the family was scarcely known by any one except herself, and almost forgotten even by her.

Among the tastes early developed by Master Edward, under his aunt's direction, was a liking for jewellery, for bright and glittering things. One of the greatest pleasures of his life, for some little time, was riding into Shrewsbury to shop with his aunt. Aunt Eleanor had given him a watch and chain, and on this chain he had the fancy to hang bric-a-brac; fish, lizards, crosses, lockets, which you will. And this shop, where young Gray—Aunt Eleanor's other *protégé*—was located, supplied things of this kind, of Palais Royal manufacture, cheap, soon dimmed in rust, soon cast aside. Young Evans soon got over this fancy of his for glittering things, though he

always retained his passion for gaudry; yet his continual going into this shop, to get these two-penny Palais Royal trifles, led to a result with which we have to do. It led to an acquaintance between him and the youth, Gray, who was deputed to sell them to him. And the youth Gray was as fond of glittering and gaudy things as was Childe Evans. And so the youth and the young boy, setting their heads together, "Ye'll no hinder them," as the Scotch say, from getting uncommonly fond of one another. Roland always disliked him, as far as his gentle nature could allow him to dislike any one. But at any time, when Roland denounced young Gray as a sententious young Methodist, Edward would plead so well with his deer-like eyes, that he would cause Roland's objurgations to die away into silence.

Roland and Edward, when old enough, were sent to a school, which I will call Gloucester, to avoid personality, reserving always for myself, in case of action for damages, the right of fixing my own dates.

Our young jeweller's master moved from Shrewsbury to Gloucester a short time before

Roland and Edward went into school there together; and so Edward and Allan Gray were once more brought together. The acquaintance between Gray and Childe Evans got cemented there, not much to Roland's pleasure. Edward bought no jewellery now, but got himself taken to strange places of worship by this imperial-looking young jeweller's apprentice, who could look at the splendid Roland as though he were an Oliver (forgive me). Roland did not like it, any more than the Doctor. The Doctor said that Roland should speak to Edward on the subject. Roland, though only fourteen to his brother's thirteen, declined.

"It would bring a cloud between Eddy and myself," said the boy, "and I intend that there shall be no cloud between Eddy and me till we die."

Of course, with a fool of fourteen like this, there was nothing to be done. The Doctor pitched into Eddy. "It is not unknown to me, sir, that you have been in the company of an apprentice of this town, not only to a Dissenting place of worship, but also to the Papist chapel. It is the greatest scandal which has

occurred at this school since its foundation. shall write to your father."

"I wouldn't do that, sir," said poor little Eddy; "we were only looking about for ourselves. And we don't like either the one thing or the other."

"*You like!*" said the Doctor. "*You like!* Here, I'll sort *your* nonsense pretty quick. What was last week's memoriter?" "Non ebur neque aurem," began the poor boy, "Mea renidet in——"

"Write it out twenty times, sir, and keep school," said the Doctor. "We will have a finish and an end of all this."

Roland did his brother's task for him, and was furious against the Doctor. But as Roland's fury against the Doctor will have to keep six years, by which time it had become changed to love and reverence, I will say little about it. Merely mentioning the fact that there was a third member of the Evans family, a pretty little girl, I will leave the Evans family—for what will be to you a few minutes—and describe another Shropshire family.

CHAPTER VI.

OLD Mordaunt, of Mordaunt Hall, used to say that his wife always had twins. When this statement was examined, you found that Mrs. Mordaunt had but two children—Johnny immediately after her marriage, and Jemmy twelve months afterwards, yet when

“The petrified spectator asked, in undisguised alarm,” which was Johnny and which was Jemmy, the problem used to be solved by saying that Johnny was the fatter. But, then, neither of them *was* fat.

One—the elder—was broader, and less symmetrical than the younger one, James, more commonly called Jimmit. During the holidays, part of which young Edward Evans spent with his Aunt Eleanor, these two youths were frequent guests at her house. She pronounced them to be entirely similar, and utterly devoid

of character. In which opinion she was not wholly right.

The Evanses and the Mordaunts both went to Gloucester together, and, as neighbours, saw a great deal of one another. Both families also had a little girl, younger than either of the brothers, with whom, at present, we have nothing to do—they were in the school-room still; and I have been turned out of the school-room by the governess at lesson-time too often to try and enter it again. By-the-bye, are governesses so dreadfully bullied and ill-treated as it is the custom to represent? For my part, ever since I was six years old until now, I have been almost as afraid of them as I am of a school-master, and have been used to see them have pretty much their own way; but there are families, and families, no doubt.

I must quit speculation to give a letter, which was written at the time when these four lads were at ages ranging from seventeen to nineteen, and were all going up to matriculate at St. Paul's College—at either university you like. It came from the head-master of Gloucester Grammar School, himself a man from

Trinity College, Cambridge, and was addressed to the Senior Tutor at St. Paul's—his old friend and contemporary.

“DEAR GEORGE,—You have asked me more than once to send you a boy or two, and I have always hesitated because I have always disliked your college, its ways, and its works. Now, however, that P—— E—— and O—— have married off altogether on college livings, and have undertaken cures of souls (their creed seeming to be that gentlemen's sons have no souls, or, like the French marquis, will be saved by rent-roll); now that you are first in command practically, I send you, my dear George, not one boy, but a batch of four. And, take them all in all, they are the finest batch of boys I have ever turned out.

“Let us speak plainly to one another, for we have never fairly done so. The reason of our clinging so strenuously to university work was the disappointment about Miss Evans. Well, we have never spoken of it before. I only ask you to stick to it a little longer, if it is only to see this batch of boys through.

“ I don't know whether I am justified in sending them to you. You know, my dear George, that your college has been under the management of your old master and the three men who have retired to the cure of agricultural labourers' souls ; very fast, very disreputable, and most extravagantly expensive. Nothing seems to have done well but the boat, which, having less than a mile to row, has, by developing a blind, furious ferocity, kept the head of the river. And in the schools you have only had a few first-class men, all of your training, with second, third, and fourth blanks.

“ You say that you will mend all, and raise your tone. Of course you will. If I don't die, like Arnold, over this teaching, I will send you any number of boys in two years, when your influence has begun to work, and when the influence of the three pastors so lately sent out from high table and common room to catch agricultural sheep by the leg with their crook (Heaven save the mark!) has died out. But at present I am dubious. However, I have *done* it. Mind you the issue, as you will have to appear before God.

“Now, I must tell you about these fellows, and must go through them. In the aggregate, they are an extremely queer lot. They are extremely rude and boisterous, as my boys generally are, though perfect gentlemen if you put them on their mettle. They are absolutely innocent of the ways of the world, and will, no doubt, get thoroughly laughed out of all that by your young dandies, whom I, as a Cambridge man, most entirely detest. To proceed about the aggregate of them, they are all very strong and very rich. The total of their present income is considerably more than you and I shall have the spending of when we have worked ourselves to the gates of death, and they have taken to boat-racing—a thing I hate and detest from the bottom of my soul, as being one of the most stupid and most brutalizing of all our sports. I know, however, that you do not think so. If there was any chance of their losing all their property together, we might make something of them. As it is, you must back up my efforts to make something of them. Nothing stands in their way but their wealth.

“Now, I will begin with them individually,

and I begin with Roland Evans. Do you retain your old Platonic love for perfect physical beauty, perfect innocence, and high intelligence and ambition? If so, you had better not see too much of my Aristides, Antinous Evans. The lad wonders why I laugh when I look at him. I laugh with sheer honest pleasure at his beauty. He is like the others, a boy of many prayers, but of few fears. If he could get his influence felt in your deboshed old college, he would do as much as you, old friend. But he is so gentle, and so young, that I fear he will not do much for you at once.

“ I pass to the elder Mordaunt. The elder Mordaunt is a wonderfully strong, bull-headed lad, whose course at school has been perfectly blameless, fulfilling every possible duty, but declining to show any *specialité* except wonderful Latin prose. There is something under the thick hide of him somewhere, for I have seen it looking at me from behind that dark-brown eye of his a hundred times. Can you fetch it out? I have not been able. I have often been inclined to throw the book at the head of this young man, in return for his quiet contempla-

tive stare ; but I have never done so. I flogged him once, because Sir Jasper Meredith (a cripple) let off a musical box in chapel, and I thought it was the elder Mordaunt. It was arranged between the Mordaunts and Meredith that the elder Mordaunt was to take the thrashing, because little Sir Jasper was not fit to take it. Sir Jasper Meredith came crying to me afterwards, and told the whole business. I never had occasion to flog the elder Mordaunt again. Be careful of this fellow, George. I don't understand him. You may.

“I come now to the younger Mordaunt. And now I find that I have to tell a little story. Young Mordaunt was an unimpressionable lad, quite unnoticed by me, and nearly so by the lower masters, under whose hands he was passing, who only made their reports on him to me for extreme violence and fury. I have often had to flog this boy—you say what a nice employment for an educated gentleman—*cela va sans dire* ; and on one occasion, I held him ready for expulsion. It was the most terrible case of bullying which had ever happened : four fifth-form boys, just ready for the sixth,

had set on a sixth-form boy, just about to leave us for the army, and beaten him with singlesticks, to that extent that he had to be taken to the hospital, as it appeared, with his own consent, for he made no complaint. The younger Mordaunt was one of the beaters, one of the attacking party, and I was going to expel them all, until the elder Mordaunt, backed by my brother, the master of the lower third, explained the circumstances, upon which I did a somewhat different thing. I held my tongue, and gave the beaten boy a chance for a new life.

“ The elder Mordaunt and the elder Evans, Roland, lately grandfathers of the school, have always respected and honoured one another. But between the young Mordaunt and the elder Evans there was for a long time a great dislike. I have it from a former monitor, now Balliol scholar, that they actually fought on three occasions. Of course they were no match; the elder Evans easily beat the younger Mordaunt, while the elder Mordaunt, although an affectionate brother, positively declined to give his younger brother even the use of his knee during these encounters.

“The reason of the reconciliation between these two was odd. The cause of these encounters was the persistent bullying of the younger Evans, who was the fag of the younger Mordaunt. I have always forbidden bathing before the tenth of May, and have seldom been disobeyed. On one occasion, however, the younger Mordaunt disobeyed me, and before the winter’s water was run off, determined to bathe in the weir, and having told his intention to a few, started, taking his fag, little Eddy Evans, to mind his clothes.

“It came to the ears of Roland Evans and old Mordaunt, who followed quickly with some other sixth-form boys, and were happily in time. You, as an Oxford man, know what lashers are ; you know the Gaisford and Philimore monument, set up to warn boys, if they could be warned, of the deadly suck under the apron.

“Well, the younger Mordaunt stripped and headed into the furious boil. He was in difficulties directly. Instead of being carried down into the shallow below, he was taken under, and disappeared. He rose again, and with

infinite courage and coolness, swam into the slack water, and tried to hold on by the Camp's heading. But it was slippery, and he was carried again into the race, and turned over and over.

“ When old Evans and old Mordaunt came, angrily, on the scene, all they saw was young Evans tearing the last of his clothes off. He knew his brother's voice, and he cried out, ‘ Shut down the paddles ; he has come up again.’ And then, forgetting cruelties which he had suffered, and insults which he had wept over in secret, he cast his innocent little body into the foaming dangerous lasher, and had his bitter enemy round the waist in one moment, trying to keep his head above the drowning rush of the water. Of course, Roland was in after them in a few seconds.

“ Cool old Mordaunt, who should be a general, I think, had, while rapidly undressing, let down the paddles. The pool was still now, too terribly still, they tell me. The two elder lads, swimming high and looking for their brothers, saw neither, until the handsome little head of Eddy Evans rose from the water, and said, ‘ I had him here, this instant, and he will be car-

ried back by the wash.' Roland Evans, a splendid shoulder-swimmer, was with his brother in a moment, and saw young Mordaunt drowning on the gravel beneath him, spreading out his fine limbs, like a Christopher's cross, with each of his ten fingers spread out, taking leave of the world. Never seen it? Better not; it is ugly; I have seen it several times, and don't like it. Well, the two Evanses had him out on the shallow before his brother, a slow breast-swimmer, could come up, and saved him. That is all my story.

“ But it has changed this younger Mordaunt's life in some way. The great temptation of our English boys is brutality and violence, and this bathing accident has tamed him. The boy prayed more, as I gained from his brother, and desired that thanks should be given in chapel for his preservation, coupled (fancy that! to me,) with the condition that the names of the two Evanses should be mentioned with his. I refused to do so: heaven knows why! Whereupon the boy turned on *me*, and, face to face, refused to have any thanks given at all. He said he would give his own thanks.

“ He is entirely tamed, if you can keep him *en rapport* with these two Evanses. He will follow them anywhere, and do just as they tell him, whether that be right or wrong. I never liked him, and I still think him boyish in many ways, though innocent almost to childishness in the way you wot of. He has brains, more brains than his brother. But he is a disagreeable boy. He has a nasty way of sitting straight up and frowning, and there is a petulant preciseness about him which I cannot bear. Try being civil and kind to him—I have never been. You have more power in that way as a Don than I have as a schoolmaster.

“ Now I come to my last boy, young Evans. I won't say anything at all about this boy: I leave him to you. If you can stand his pretty ways, I can't.

“ These boys will be a terrible plague to you. They make so much noise: don't stop them in that if you can help it. My best boys are noisy and outspoken. Coming from me, you need not doubt their scholarship: keep it up. They are, to conclude, an innocent lot of lads,

dreadfully rich, and have taken up, I fear, with this most abominable boat-racing, which, however, is not so bad as steeple-chasing.

“ Now good-bye. I have sent you a team fit for Balliol in scholarship, for Christchurch in breeding, and, I very much fear, for Brazenose in boating. Why Providence should have placed so many of our public schools near great rivers, where the stock gets steadily brutalized by that insane amusement, I cannot conceive. Old religious foundations, you say, always near rivers, then highways, and in the neighbourhood of fish for fast days. Fiddle-dee ! It all arises from the perversion (misrepresentation) of the edicts of the first original council, in the year 1, when it was agreed that everything was to be where it was wanted. The only dissentient, you well remember, was the devil, who moved as an amendment, that there should be full liberty of conscience, that every one should say the first thing which came into his head, and everybody was to do as he pleased. The great first council rejected, if you remember, this amendment with scorn ; but we are acting on it now. Let us take the

benefit of the new opinions. Come over and talk Swivellerism to me, and I will back myself to talk as much balderdash as you. But don't talk any of it to my boys. I insult you, my dear George, by the supposition.

‘P.S.—A tall, handsome-looking young booby, from Eton, comes with them from Shropshire. His father, calling here with the fathers of the other boys, asked me to say a good word to you on his behalf. I would if I could, but I don't know anything at all about him, except that he is to be married to Miss Evans, by a family arrangement, before he is capable of knowing his own mind. He has been brought up with the Evanses and the Mordaunts, and therefore cannot be very bad. But you know my opinion of Eton, and indeed of all public schools except my own.’

CHAPTER VII.

FURNISHED with this important epistle, the Dean of St. Paul's (college) felt a natural curiosity to see the young men who had attracted so much of the attention of undoubtedly the very best schoolmaster of the day, since the *dies infaustus* when Arnold's old pupil came down to breakfast with fresh questions, and heard that *the* master had called for *his* master, and that he had arisen and followed him speedily.

The Dean was a dry man, and a man of humour. Saint Paul's was, in those times, a queer, wild place; it was partly "manned" by county gentlemen's and county parsons' sons, from the counties of Gloucester, Worcester, Shropshire, and generally from the Welsh borders; and partly from two grammar schools in Lancashire and the West Riding of

Yorkshire. The two sets of lads never spoke to one another. The former set were always perfect gentlemen in their manners, though not always in their morals: the latter were mainly gentlemen in their morals, but never in their manners. It was vinegar upon nitre with them, and the dry, shrewd, caustic Dean looked with great anticipation of amusement for the curious "team" which the head-master of Gloucester had sent him up.

He had undertaken the Latin prose lecture of that somewhat scholarless college, and had repeatedly said that it would bring him to an untimely grave, but after a fellow-commoner translating "The Art of Mingling in Society" in English of Addison, into Latin of his own, the Dean had dropped the Latin prose lecture, and had taken to the Greek. "You are safer in Greek," he said. "I am not good in Greek, and so I may live the longer. But I couldn't stand the Latin any more."

So it was in the Greek prose lecture that the Dean expected his young friends, with great curiosity. They were the first who came, very early, and they came sidling and whispering

into the room one after another, and sat down in a row, each one saying as he went by, "Good morning, sir," while the Dean stood and looked at them. Can one not see him now, with his broad shoulders, and his keen eyes looking out from under his wig?

They sat down in the chair opposite to him, and he had a good look at them. The first who came in was Roland Evans, evidently leader among them, a splendid upstanding young fellow, with short curling hair, who carried his head like a stag. "A fine face and a good head," thought the Dean. "I wonder what is inside it?" Next to him came his brother—a small, slight, bright-looking lad, rather too pretty to please the Dean's taste, but pleasant to see, with a wistful look in his clear brown eyes, which the Dean did not disapprove of. Next came the elder of the two Mordaunts, gigantic, somewhat stolid in appearance, looking as the Dean thought with Falstaff, "land and beeves." Then came the younger Mordaunt, gigantic also, and rather cross-looking, but with a good square head; as he passed on, he gave one look at the Dean, and let him

know unmistakably that he considered him in the light of his natural enemy. Last of all came the "booby" who was to marry Miss Evans, and when the Dean looked on him, he thought at once: "The rest are a puzzling lot, but there is no doubt about you; you carry your turnpike ticket in your hat; you are a good fellow, and so I think is that Roland Evans."

But he was puzzlingly amused by them on one account: four out of the five seemed strangely cast in the same mould. Here were two pairs of brothers, and a fifth young man, and they were all cast in the same mould, with the exception of the younger Evans, who seemed poetical. Had this batch of lads come under his notice with any other recommendation than that of the shrewd Doctor, he would have set them down for four young louts of the land-holding persuasion from the western counties, and have thought no more about them; but his friend had sent them to him as four of his picked boys, and Balliol would have opened her gates to them; yet there they sat in a row before him, silent and apparently stupid, occasionally sneaking their eyes up at his, as

though to see what he was like, but dropping them again directly. "Is there character here?" the Dean asked himself. "K. should know; he said they were boisterous and troublesome. They are quiet enough now."

The odd contrast between the apparently stupid *insouciance* of the Englishman at one time, and his violent fury at another, seemed to be hardly known to the Dean as yet: he got an illustration of it.

The other men, to the number of some thirty, dropped in, and the lecture proceeded. Anything more saint-like than the behaviour of the Shropshire five was never seen. The lecture consisted in turning "Spectator" into Greek prose, and after half an hour, every one being ready, the Dean called on Roland Evans, who stood up, and on being told that he might sit down, was very much confused. He read out his few sentences of Greek prose, and the Dean leant back in his chair.

"That is really splendid, Mr. Evans. I could not write such Greek myself. Read it again, please, and listen to it, you others." Roland did so.

“Do you all write Greek like this at Gloucester? This is refreshing. Good heavens! when I think of the trash my ears are dinned with. Here, Mr. Mordaunt the elder, read *your* piece next: let me see if it runs in families, or is common to the school.”

Old Mordaunt—sitting, as we used to say at school, one place below young Evans—did so, and his piece was very good. “Now, young Mr. Evans, read yours.”

It appeared that these youths were under the impression that they could *take places*. They had come in and sat down in their old Gloucester class form. Young Eddy Evans had in his piece a passage of Addison’s or Steele’s in which occur the words, “pray do not deceive yourself on this matter.” Young Evans gave it “μη πλανάσθη.” Whereupon both the Mordaunts rose to their feet, and cried with one voice, “I challenge.”

Before the astonished Dean could say one word, the two brothers were at it tooth and nail.

“I challenged first,” said old Mordaunt.

“You did nothing of the kind,” said the

younger. "You read the fourth chapter of Acts, and see what happened to Ananias and Sapphira."

"That's a pretty thing to say to your own brother," said old Mordaunt.

"Not a worse thing than trying to cut your own brother out of a place. Why do you challenge?" said the younger brother.

"Because it's Greek Testament, and wrong in person," said the elder, scornfully.

"Testament Greek is good enough—better than you could write. I challenge on other grounds. Ask him, sir, what letter he puts before the sigma."

The younger Evans, confused and directed by his evil genius, said hurriedly, "Epsilon." The younger Mordaunt at once sank back in his chair with the air of a man who had done a happy thing, and, addressing the Dean, said—

"This, sir, is a specimen of the scholarship of the Doctor's house-boys. If a commons-house boy had made such a mess, he would have been clobbered by the school."

At which dreadful words wrath and fury

were depicted on the faces of the two Evanses, and of Maynard, who was engaged to their sister. Young Evans rose, perfectly calm, and, addressing the Dean as "Dominus," said that as the rules of English society prevented one boy from personally asking any explanation from any other boy in class, and indeed, in any place but the playground, whether he, the Dominus, would be so good as to demand, *in his character as Dominus, of Mordaunt minor,* when he was caned last, and what it was for. Whereupon Maynard, who had taken no part as yet, cried out, "Go it, young Evans!"

"It was your brother who pressed the spring and set it going," said old Mordaunt.

"It was nothing of the kind; and no one knows it better than yourself," said Roland Evans. "I never touched it; what did he want with it at chapel?"

"I suppose he could take his musical snuff-box into chapel," said old Mordaunt, now, after the preliminary skirmish, in close alliance with his brother. "I suppose he had as good a right to bring his musical box in as you had to bring in your Buttman's Lexilogus."

“ Well, you need not turn up old things like that,” said Roland Evans.

“ Then you leave my brother alone, and I’ll leave you alone. As for you, young Evans, you ought to have the Lexilogus banged about your stupid young head, and you would have had three months ago.”

The Dean had by this time partly recovered from the stupor into which he had been plunged by this unexpected and violent storm. He found breath enough to say, “ Gentlemen, I must really request, and of necessity insist, that this unseemly objurgation ceases at once.” After a few growls and sniffs the lecture proceeded. The Gloucester boys’ Greek was all nearly first-class, and then the Dean waded away into a slough of miserable stuff, which was furnished to him three times a week by the other men of his college.

A deaf fellow-commoner was blundering along through his piece, and the Dean thought that everything was going right, when the younger Mordaunt, who had been frowning and bristling for some time, finding his recollected wrongs too great to be kept in any longer,

suddenly broke into articulate speech. To the unutterable terror and confusion of the whole lecture, he said, in a loud voice :

“Those two Evanses and Maynard double-banked young Perkins in the play-ground one Saturday afternoon, when the fellows were bathing, and took his money from him. And they took nineteen pence halfpenny, and all he ever got back was a shilling and a sixpence, and the shilling was bad.”

“It was the same shilling we took from him,” cried Roland, “and your fellows have double-banked ours a hundred times.”

“What became of the three half-pence then?” said old Mordaunt.

“They spent it in Banbury tarts,” said young Mordaunt.

“There were no coppers at all,” said Maynard. “And you can’t get one Banbury tart under two-pence. Now then, what do you think of that?”

The Dean again recovered himself.

“In the whole course of my experience, I never saw anything like this,” he said. “I insist on perfect silence. You five Gloucester

men will remain after lecture. I insist on silence. Mr. Jones, go on."

"Now we shall all get lines, and liberty stopped," said young Mordaunt, aloud, "and it was that young Evans began it."

"It was not," said young Evans, emphatically.

"*Will* you hold your tongue, sir," said the Dean, in a voice which they knew they must listen to. And so the lecture went on and was finished. When it was done, the five remained, and young Mordaunt whispered to old Evans, "He won't flog the lot."

The Dean began on them: "Gentlemen, your Greek is excellent, but your conduct has not been good. My friend warned me that you were boisterous. I have no great objection to juvenile spirits—in fact, I like them; but I must most emphatically insist that you will not quarrel in my lecture. You no longer take rank as schoolboys: we give young men of your age brevet rank as men. I must request that this does not happen again."

Old Mordaunt shoved young Mordaunt, who shoved young Evans, who shoved Maynard,

who shoved Roland Evans, by which he understood that *he* was to be spokesman. His speech was so odd, so very simple, so very provincial, so full of the argot of a provincial school, that the Dean scarcely understood it. He said :

“ Sir, we are very sorry to have offended you ; for myself, I have always been dead against barneying in class, for the mere purpose of spinning out the pensum. I have also tried most consistently to make friends between doctors’ boys and common-house boys, principally, I will allow, for the sake of the boats. But these jealousies do exist, sir, even among friends, as we are : I am sure all true friends. But these jealousies have existed for a long time, and are not likely to cease. I will take it on myself to say, sir, that they shall be stopped in class, and not carried into playground, and that we would rather, having begun so unluckily, be punished by task instead of by stoppage of liberty.”

The Dean impatiently paced the room, and scratched his wig. “ What the deuce,” he said to himself, “ am I to do with such boys as

these? An Eton or Harrow boy would know more of things at fourteen. Why does K. keep his boys back like this? they are as innocent as children. I never saw such a thing in my life; they fancy they are to be punished. Hang it all, let me see how green they are. Mr. Evans, how old are you?"

"Nineteen, sir."

"You have behaved very badly. Suppose I was to cane one of you."

"We understood, sir," said Roland, "that we could not be caned after we came here. If, however, you decide on that course, the only one you could cane would be my brother. No boy is ever caned over eighteen, and my brother is only seventeen."

"And it would be no use caning him!" exclaimed the irrepressible young Mordaunt: "he has been caned a dozen times for laughing in chapel. And last half I tried him to see whether he had got over it. I showed him a halfpenny in Litany, and he went off, and was taken out, and caned."

"I would gladly, sir," said Roland, "take my brother's punishment on myself; but being

over eighteen, I cannot, and should, in fact, resist; it would be almost cowardly, sir, to put the fault of all of us on my brother."

"Do go to Bath, and keep me from Bedlam!" exclaimed the irritated Dean.

And they fled off, and apparently had a free fight on the stairs; for as the Dean put it, sixteen out of the five seemed to tumble down instead of walking down.

"This is K. all over," he said to himself, when they were gone; "this is his system; sending his boys up here babies instead of men. I wish he had sent them to Balliol,— I wish he had sent them to Jericho. I have no stand-point with them. I can't get at them. They are a noble lot; but they are five years too young. And this hotbed of sin! Come in!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THERE seemed some difficulty about the person who knocked at the door coming in, as indeed there was. There was a curious pegging sound, then a gentle turning at the door-handle, and then a heavy fall. The Dean dashed out, and found a little cripple lying on his back on the landing, laughing.

“I shall do it once too often,” said the cripple. “My servant puts me into bed, but I direct my energies to tumbling out of it. I live in the gate which is called Beautiful, and am happy there; but St. John and St. Paul are in heaven and have never said to me, ‘What we have, we give thee.’ Will you help up a poor little cripple, and set him on his legs, and give him his crutch, Dean? Be St. John to me, Dean.”

“Sir Jasper Meredith!” exclaimed the Dean.

“I thought I should creep so nicely up, and

I came one stair at a time. And I made fair weather of it until I tried to turn the handle, and then I lost my balance, and fell on my back."

The Dean had never seen anything like this. He was a man of the cloister, and had heard of human ills, and of baronets with 14,000 acres, and of cripples also. But to find a feeble cripple, with 14,000 acres, flat on his back before his own door, on the landing, was a sensation for the good Dean. "And he is from Shropshire also," he considered. "Shropshire will do for us in time."

He picked the little cripple up very carefully, and brought him in. "What can I do for you, Meredith?" he said, gently.

"Give me leave to get my breath, my dear sir," began the little man. "Thank ye. Oh! that's better. I can't get on anyhow. The doctors say that it is my spine, and I say it's my legs, and I expect that I know as much about it as they do. My legs have separate individualities; in fact, I have named them differently—Libs and Auster—and they always want to go in different directions, which brings me to grief—don't you see? I suppose you have

never noticed the same thing with regard to *your* legs, for instance, have you?"

"No," said the Dean, glancing complacently at his well-formed legs. "I never experienced anything of that kind—lately."

"No," said Meredith; "your legs do look like a pair. Now mine, you will perceive, if you will do me the goodness to look at them, most distinctly are not."

"You are certainly afflicted," said the kind Dean, "and I am sorry for it."

"We will speak of that on some future occasion," said the little man. "I am not at all sure that *I* am. Being afflicted in this manner, do you see, brings you so many kind friends, and such sympathy, that I am not sure that I would change it even to be Roland Evans. Well, that is not what I came to speak about. I came on a matter of business, and I am taking up your valuable time in talking of myself. Cripples *will* talk about themselves, you know."

"My time is yours, Meredith," said the Dean, pleased by the kindly little ways of the cripple.

“Now that is very kind of you. May I take a liberty? I have been a petted boy, and am used to take liberties. May I have one little sprig of that *Wustaria* which is hanging your window with imperial purple? I half live in flowers, Dean. They are the purest forms of mere physical beauty which can be brought to me, and I cannot travel in search of beauty, you know.”

The Dean got him one at once, saying, “There is one form of physical beauty which comes to you very often, I fancy—Roland Evans.”

“Yes,” said Meredith; “I believe that he is very beautiful. But I, for my part, having known him so long, have lost the power of seeing *that*. If he were a cripple, or a leper, it would make no difference to *me*.”

“You like him, then?” said the Dean.

Meredith laughed quietly, and very absently, looking at the carpet.

“The brain is always affected in these spine diseases,” said the Dean to himself. “The poor little fellow is wool-gathering.”

Then he added, emphatically, “We were

speaking of Roland Evans, Sir Jasper Meredith. You like him, do you not?"

In an instant one of the keenest, shrewdest faces he had ever seen was turned up to his, and he stood astounded.

"Like him!" said the cripple. "Yes, like him very much indeed. You know that you yourself would like a noble young man like that (supposing that you were a cripple, which you are not) who left habitually his own amusements, in which he excelled, to attend to you; who could put you in the best place to see his innings at cricket, and come running to you after a race to tell you about it. You would like such a man as that, would you not?"

The Dean, interested, said "Yes!"

"Ah! So I like him. And, in a similar way, I like his sister, who is Viola to Sebastian. And I like the whole lot of them—the two Mordaunts, Maynard, and Eddy Evans. They are all good. I came here on a point with regard to them. I am afraid they have been behaving very badly?"

"They have been quarrelling so dreadfully," said the Dean.

“They always do in class,” said Meredith. “It is an old Gloucester dodge for spinning out the work, if one of the set has not got up enough lines.”

“If that is the case,” said the Dean, angrily, “I must request you to tell your friends that I will not suffer it again.”

“It will not happen again,” said Meredith. “They thought—I declare they did—that you would set them impositions. They are on their honour now.”

“They are an extraordinary lot of green-horns.”

“They are,” said Meredith, “with the exception of shrewd old Mordaunt. I suppose you know that none of them have ever been to London?”

“I know nothing about them,” said the Dean, “except that K. sent them here. I never saw such an extraordinary lot of fellows in my life. But you must tell them that I will not stand disturbances in lecture-time. You said that you came here to speak to me about them.”

“True,” said Meredith. “I ought to have

had notice to quit before. I will do my business. The butler tells me that, as a fellow-commoner, I must sit at the high table with you. Do relax your rule, and let me sit at the Freshman's table, with the Evanses and the Mordaunts. They help me in a hundred ways. Do let a poor cripple have his dinner among his kind at the Freshman's table."

"Your request is granted, certainly," said the Dean, laughing. "But you must tell your friends not to be so turbulent. We were told last night that the younger Mordaunt and the younger Evans fought for a plate of meat, which both claimed, and were fined by the senior man at the table."

"My groom told me this morning," said Meredith, quietly, "that the Bible clerk had sneaked. Young Evans certainly ordered the chicken, but then young Mordaunt, as senior boy, considered that he had a right to change dinners, not liking his mutton when he saw it. I am sorry they fought over it, but boys *will* fight over their victuals, you know. I dare say you have done it yourself."

There rose suddenly on the mind of the Dean

the ghost of a certain Bath bun which he had struggled for at a certain lodge at a certain school nearly twenty years before, and which had ended in a great fight in the playground with a certain great general, who was just now engaged in the reduction of Sebastopol. The Dean had the best of it, as did not the general.

“But,” said he, “they behave like schoolboys. They are ranked as men here.”

“They were schoolboys yesterday, and are schoolboys still,” said Meredith. “It rests with you to make them men. What sort of men you are going to make of them is more in your line of business than mine. Lord help you through it! for they are a rough lot. It rests with you to take up Dr. K.’s work where he left off. He has sent them here in trust to you.”

CHAPTER IX.

PULVERBATCH, one would think, was (at least in the old coaching days) as far, intellectually speaking, from anywhere, as any place could be. It was even out of the then road from Shrewsbury to Ludlow—one would have thought a very quiet road—and was intensely sleepy.

The Grange, Miss Eleanor Evans' inalienable property, was a heavy old grange, with an actual moat, in which Miss Eleanor lived as a Mariana, though with a difference. There were eight hundred acres of fat meadow and cornland around it, washed down from Caradoc, Lawley, and Longmynd; every acre of which this strenuous lady held in her own hands.

When she took possession of it, after the lapse of a bad tenant's lease, and announced her intention of farming it, her brother gave her a little good advice.

“It is worth two pounds an acre, Nell, now that the Dower Farm has fallen in, even after Dell has scourged it so. £1,600 a year—I’ll find you a good tenant.”

“Thank you,” she said, “but I am going to find a good tenant in myself.”

“You will make a mess of it.”

“Why?”

“Because you can’t farm.”

“Fiddle-de-dee,” said Eleanor, “I have been bored to death with it all my life; I ought to know something about it by this time. And, besides, women are much sharper than men. Any one can farm; don’t tell me. I will take my four thousand a year off that land, or I will know the reason why.”

“My dear Eleanor,” said her brother, “I know you to be shrewd and determined; I will allow that you have quite sufficient intellect to manage the property.”

“That is to say, as much intellect as Dell, who has 780 acres of yours. Thank you, for I am very much obliged to you for comparing me with a tipsy, muddled, uneducated old man like him. Go on,” said Eleanor.

“ You are angry, my dear,” said her brother, “ but you must remember that farming is a second nature to him.”

“ What was his first ? ” she asked.

This was one of those pieces of pure nonsense which scatter men’s nonsense. Squire Charles picked himself up as well as he could, and said, somewhat heavily :

“ Supposing that you could actually get this farm in order, and get money’s worth off it, you would be beaten at marketing.”

“ Why ? ” said Eleanor.

“ Because, not being able to go to market yourself, you would have to send your bailiff, who would cheat you.”

“ But I am not going to have any bailiff. And I am going to market my own self.”

“ The farmers will be too much for you,” said Charles.

“ Will they ? ” she said ; “ they must have had a sudden accession of brains then.”

“ Do you mean to tell me, Eleanor, that you are actually going into Shrewsbury market with samples of oats ? ”

“ Certainly.”

“It will be thought very odd, and some will say improper.”

“I know nothing about your last epithet. With regard to oddity, now look round among the county families around us, and say whether or no there is not a queer story among every one of them. There is an odd story in our own family, Charles.”

“You mean about me.”

“I mean about you. But I want to finish about this farming business. I am going to do it. I pay rent to myself; I have quite as much knowledge of farming as Dell, and ten times his intellect; why should I not do well?”

“You will be beaten in market,” said Charles.

“We will see about that,” said Eleanor.

She certainly was right, for she “gave her mind to it,” and became one of the best farmers and keenest marketers about. Her scourged land recovered, as if by magic. She had good years and bad years, but she made money and a good deal of it; as a very diligent and clever person, with no rent to pay, and over seven hundred acres of fine land, may do. As time went on, her brother saw that he was wrong,

and he told her so; and added, "And you seem to be very happy, Eleanor."

"I am as happy as the day is long," she said. "I have no time to be otherwise. I am interested and amused all day long, in all weathers, and I have perfect health, and no cares. Women are frequently very great fools to marry."

"Yet it would be well to have another to care and work for," said Charles.

"I have got Eddy; he is my son, and I know he will be extravagant, and bring my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. I have spoilt him," she added, laughing, "therefore I must work and slave to meet his extravagance. As I have brewed, so must I bake; I have made my bed and I must lie on it, as regards him. I gave him a new watch last week."

"So I saw. I hope he did not ask for it?"

"Oh, no; he never asks for anything, only he looks so pretty when he is pleased, and he likes bright and glittering things. I must work and save for him."

"You will not save much with those new cottages," said her brother; "you ought never

to lay one brick on another, till you see your way to a clear seven per cent., exclusive of bad debts; and you will never see three there."

"Say two and a half," said Eleanor, "but it pays me indirectly on my own estate. I have my labourers on my own ground, close to their work. What would you say of the wisdom of a slave-owner who made her niggers walk three miles to the cotton grounds?"

"You will raise the rates."

"I don't care. Oh! by-the-bye, your head-keeper has been asking me whether he may rear some pheasants in my large spinney, and I have told him that I should like to catch him at it. Your partridges I will protect for you, but I won't have pheasants, rabbits, or hares; you have plenty of ground of your own without bothering me."

Squire Charles laughed, and left her admiringly.

So she went on, busy, happy, quiet, contented, until I regret that it becomes necessary to pick her up at the age of forty-four years, just at the time when that extraordinary set of boys,

which I have previously described, had begun their most eccentric career at St. Paul's College.

The Grange at Pulverbatch was like so many Shropshire houses, a place worthy a long summer-day's visit. It was a low stone house, shrouded in and darkened by great dense groves of elms. Sooner than touch one bough of which, Eleanor would have sold her watch; though she had very much spoilt the scenery of the valley, by slashing into her hedge-row timber elsewhere most unmercifully, and cutting down her hedges to the famishing point. I am not antiquarian enough to say who built it or why it was built, but Eleanor had chosen to get it into her head that it was built by a small country gentleman, at the time, as she put it, "when the greatest of all Englishmen for all time, Oliver Cromwell, ruled the land, and had one Milton for his Poet-Laureate." A mild antiquarian, on one occasion, by way of making himself agreeable, told her in a mild voice that her house was formerly a religious house, a cell of the larger house of St. Lawrence at Stretton.

“It was nothing of the kind, sir,” she answered, indignantly.

“I think you will find that I am right,” said the mild man.

“I don’t believe a word of it,” said Eleanor, And the mild antiquarian said no more.

“It was moated around on all sides, for defence,” she said; “carp-ponds,” said the antiquarian; and this moat was part of her belief in the place.

There were carp in this moat, and although she was shrewd enough to prefer the splendid trout which came out of the stream running through her estate for her own eating, yet on state occasions she always, as a great treat, gave her guests these abominable masses of dry bones, out of the moat. They were to her as a haggis or a sheep’s head is to a Scotchman. She used to send them to her neighbours, as rare compliments and presents. Well, she had few prejudices, and those were very innocent.

We shall see more of her kind, innocent, wise life as we go on: a little more about her house, and herself, and she will be sufficiently fully introduced.

I should think, from what I have observed, that almost the first ambition of every clever woman was to have a *room of her own*, a place where she was mistress, and could do as she pleased, (surely some clever woman has said this before, though I cannot recollect where, but it is true). I have seen such rooms; I know at least two; and I guess that in these maiden bowers, women, whether poor or rich, symbolize their own souls, or the phases of them. I know a bower, hung with crude oil-sketches and photographs of great pictures; again, I know another, full of saints, angels, and crucifixes. I suppose that every woman would have such a nest—alas! how few are able. Eleanor, however, had her nest, which most decidedly symbolized her pursuits.

Eleanor's nest was what her brother called "the dining-room," but what she would insist on calling, out of contradiction mainly, I think, "the best parlour." It was a dark wainscoted room, with a large stone-jambed bay-window at the end furthest from the door, in front of which her great library table, with innumerable drawers, was placed, and by which the only

available light was let into this wonderfully uncomfortable room. At this table she could look over her beloved moat, and write her letters. Here she received her men, and her poor folks; and here she sat one afternoon, soon after the boys had gone to St. Paul's, reading her letters and answering them.

She was in her usual riding habit, and had been on foot or on horseback since six o'clock in the morning. As the light from the only window fell upon her face, you could see that, although her complexion might have suffered (or been improved) by wind, weather and hard work, there was no doubt that she was still a singularly beautiful woman.

She had had all kinds of letters by that post, and she had read them, and laid them aside for answer. Mr. Sutton, of Reading, informed Miss Evans that he did not approve of such a large admixture of triticum in the grass-seed intended for soil washed from limestone hills, but had executed the order under Miss Evans's direction, and begged to inform her that the "Student" parsnip, from Cirencester, was well worth a trial. Barr and Sugden

informed her that they would, if possible, execute her small order for 5,000 snowdrops, but that a regular customer had come down on them for 14,000, and they were at present uncertain. A neighbouring miller wrote to say that if she would thrash out at once, he would chance the four big ricks at 54 (to which she said, "I dare say"); under all of which there was a letter from her lawyer, telling her that the dispute about the old arrears, hanging on since Dell's time, was settled against her; and several begging-letters.

These were put aside for answering: *they* caused her no thought. It was the two she had just read which made her sit with her handsome head in the light, and really think. Let us look over her shoulder. The first was from young Allan Gray, the young man who was the son of the soldier Gray, and who, by natural laws, was nephew of Charles and Eleanor Evans, and cousin to Roland and Edward.

It ran thus:—

“MY DEAR MADAM,—I enclose you Mr. Secretary Cowell's receipt for the very noble

donation to our poor little work. I know that the pleasure you had in giving it is even higher than is ours in receiving it; I am requested to thank you for it, madam, and I thank you accordingly. Mr. Taunton, one of our best helpers, offered prayer for you to-night, madam, in the general prayer, and by name. This I know will be gratifying to you."

("Well, and so it is," said Eleanor. "I am sure we all want it.")

"I wish, madam, that you could come and pay us a visit here, say when you come to the Cattle Show, at Christmas. I wish that such a shrewd and yet kind heart as yours could see what actual good we are doing among the misery and guilt around us.

"With deep reverence and gratitude, I remain, dear madam, your devoted servant,

"ALLAN GRAY."

"Yes," said Eleanor, "you are a good boy, and a shrewd boy, and a grateful boy; but I doubt I can't like you. You would be glad to be rid of your obligations to me to-morrow. I ought to like you, but I can't."

She was a shrewd, hard woman, this Eleanor Evans; not given to show sentiment, yet, when she opened the next letter she kissed it, and said, "My darling, now we will have *you*, after this Methodistical young prig. All the flowers in May are not so sweet as you, but you might write better you know." The letter was from Eddy, and she read it with concentrated attention, weighing every word, this sensible and keen lady, going over the sentences three or four times to extract their meaning (of which there was but little). Don't laugh at her; a love as keen and pure as hers is not ridiculous. Perhaps Gray's letter was more sensible, but this boy's nonsense was infinitely dearer to her.

"DEAR AUNT NELL,—You know that in one of our delightful, confidential talks the other day, you, in laying down our mutual plans for the future, said that one day I must get a good wife, and come and live with you. You hinted that you would, in the case of such an event, make over the main part of your personal property to me; only reserving to yourself one

single room. You remember the alacrity with which I fell into the arrangement, and the extreme anxiety I have always shown to carry out your wishes. Consequently, I have kept my weather-eye open for above a fortnight, and after long and painful consideration, I am able to declare myself suited for life.

“To a well-balanced mind, such as I believe mine to be (it is your look-out if it is not), wealth, position, nay, even beauty itself, weigh as nothing in the balance in a choice of this kind, in comparison with solidity of character. Gain that and you gain everything. I have gained it.

“Of course I should not think of moving definitively in such an important matter as this without consulting you, my more than mother, to whom I owe so much. By-the-bye, this last remark reminds me that I may as well owe you a little more, while we are at it. Roland has boned all my money because young Mordaunt and I gave half-a-sovereign a-piece to a young man we found on the Trumpington road, with scarcely shoes to his feet, just come out of Reading Hospital. So do send me

some ; make it a tenner, if you can ; as much more as you like. I am sure that you must have thrashed out the three ricks by now, and must be in cash. Don't you hold your corn back in the way you do, raising the market on the poor. You thrash out, and send me a ten-pound note, and I'll bring you a present, if there is any of it left.

“ I suppose this will be the first intimation you will have had of our splendid success. Roland has done such a thing which is simply unequalled in history. To be continued in our next, provided you send the money.

“ Yours lovingly,

“ EDWARD EVANS.

“ P.S.—I bought a squirrel of a cad in the meadow, who said it was tame. On calling it to our rooms, it bit me to the bone, and ran up the chimney. This is a wicked and ungrateful world. I doubt, I am already nigh weary of it.”

Aunt Eleanor put this letter aside, and answered young Gray's first.

“MY DEAR MR. GRAY,—I must beg that in any future communications to me, you will omit mentioning any obligations which you conceive you still owe to me. Such obligations certainly existed at one time, but they exist no longer. I therefore request, sir, that they may be no longer mentioned between us.

“At my mother’s desire, I did all I possibly could for you. You on your part have repaid me a thousand-fold, by turning out so well, and by leading such a blameless, godly, and, I hope, prosperous life as you are leading. What I did for you was from a sense of duty, and not on any sentimental grounds, for you and I never liked one another, which you know as well as I do, if you choose—(last three words erased). Consequently, my dear sir, now you have risen to your present honourable position, I must tell you that these continual protestations of gratitude towards a woman you always disliked are not good ton.

“It seems strange that two people so utterly separated as we are by every thought and every feeling should be engaged in the same work, that of ameliorating the condition of the poor.

But it is so. If you wish to put *me* under obligations, you will show me how I can further assist you in your very noble work, and further how I can, in case of your requiring pecuniary help yourself, assist you. I can admire you without liking you; and I am told by Mr. Cowell, whom I knew before you did, that you are decreasing your own income by these good works.

“ELEANOR EVANS.”

When Allan Gray got this letter, he rose with set lips and walked up and down the room. “A bitter, bitter, hard, cruel woman,” he said; “an insult in every tone of it. Well, if she can be bitter, I can be bitter too;” and so he sat down and wrote:—

“MADAM,—I very much regret that a few expressions of personal gratitude, which since your last letter are no longer felt, should have caused you such very deep annoyance. The cause being removed the effect will not reappear.

“With regard to my personal pecuniary matters, madam, they are in good order. With regard to the Refuge, send as much money to

us as you possibly can. 'Sell all that thou hast,' if you like. With regard to our personal relations, madam, I can only say, as a man who never told a lie, that I respect and reverence you deeply.

“ALLAN GRAY.”

“The fellow has got go, though,” said Eleanor: “but a brimstone temper; well, we are rid of *him* for a time. I will send them some money, and go and see them.”

Now we come to the answer to Eddy's letter, and the reply to *that*. A bitter, hard woman, was she, Master Gray? Bitter to you: bitter to one who showed her every day and all day that he disliked his obligations to her, but not a bitter woman, though shrewd of tongue, towards the world. Was she strong? certainly; as strong a woman as most. Was she weak? she was weaker than water to some few: to a very few. She could fight and beat her brother easily, and he was an “upstanding” man. Young Gray she could beat as the dust under her feet; yet he was as self-contained and as mentally powerful a young man as most; you will see that for yourselves. Yet where she

loved she was utterly powerless. And among others, she loved Eddy; nay, she loved him the dearest of them all.

Her brother went about with her on the subject of spoiling Eddy. He pointed out to her that her power over him was great, that her responsibilities with regard to him were great, and that she should not let him have his own way.

“I can’t help it,” she said.

“You, so strong-minded and energetic,” said her brother, “allow yourself to be made a perfect fool of by that boy!”

“I tell you I can’t help it,” said Eleanor, somewhat emphatically.

“You should. You will spoil him,” said her brother.

“I never spoilt you, at all events,” flashed out Eleanor. And Squire Charles, with certain school-room reminiscences in his mind, was obliged to admit that she certainly never had.

Now, with the almost cruel, almost vulgar tone of the answer to young Gray fresh in one’s mind, let us turn to her answer to that bright little nephew of hers, Eddy Evans, and

see whether or no there were not two sides to this woman :—

“DEAREST EDDY,—Your letter gives me the deepest interest. I congratulate you sincerely, my dear, in having found a partner for life. I go this afternoon to take the joyful intelligence to your father and mother, who will, no doubt, be made as happy as I am. Pray give my dearest love to your dear one, and say that I shall be happy to receive her on a visit as soon as she chooses, and to present her to her new father and mother-in-law.

“I think it of all things important that a person of a character so frivolous and empty as yours, should early become imbued with a sense of responsibility, and on those grounds I am delighted that you have taken this important step.

“I have not thrashed-out yet ; the steamer comes to-morrow ; but I have found an odd ten pounds. Do get out of that foolish habit of giving your money away like a baby. You will probably hear from your father the day after to-morrow on the subject of your grand alliance.

“Write to me, and tell me what Roland has done, what ‘your great success’ is, and what share *you* had in it. I can quite understand that Roland has done something unexampled in history, for I believe Roland to be capable of anything; the only thing which puzzles me is that *you* should have had any hand in it. Write and explain. I will do anything at any time, my dear, to give you pleasure.”

After a few pleasant days among her turnips and her beasts, during which she was observed to have very often a smile of amusement on her face, Aunt Eleanor got Eddy’s reply.

“DEAR AUNT,—If you are willing to do anything to give me pleasure, you had better send another cheque for ten pounds (unless you like to make it twenty), because that gave me the deepest pleasure, as it did also to Jimmy Mordaunt. We have spent some of it in riot and dissipation, but have still some of it in hand. You have no idea of the temptations of this place, the facilities of credit, and the

casiness with which young men of my personal appearance and of my expectations, can raise money from the lenders, at ruinous interest. If I sent a son here, the first thing I should take care of would be that he was supplied with large sums of ready money, and so kept from all risk of temptation. Believe me that such is my experience.

“ With regard to the young person of whom I spoke to you in my first letter (I never spoke to her), I doubt if she will do. She is a barmaid down the river. I don't think she will do; but, as you have told father, I will keep my eye on her, with a view of keeping her hanging over his head, and keeping him civil.

“ We never were frivolous so long together before, aunt. Suppose we drop it; but this place is a perfect atmosphere of chaff. I don't like it half as well as the old place. *There*, between-whiles of racket and horse-play we were serious. Well, there is not much that is serious in what I am going to tell you, except that old Roland has suddenly become a kind of hero in the University. Roland is the first man who ever won the University sculls in his first term,

and my share in the victory was running along the bank and howling at him.

“ I need not remind you of the Doctor’s objections to our having Robert Coombes to Gloucester to teach us to row, and how his objections were overcome by our father and Mr. Mordaunt; at all events, as far as money went. The fruits of that teaching have come out now.

“ The third day we were here, Roland and I went early in the day, before the others were on the river, and Roland began trying sculling boats at the principal place where they are let. He was a long time before he found one to suit him, and kept going up and down in front of the barges, trying one after another, and changing frequently, during which time I noticed that he was attracting the attention of the people who were standing by. At last he found one which he said he could feel, and sent a waterman and myself to the tow-path side, at which time I observed that the principal boat-proprietors, and at least a dozen other people, had crossed, and were standing about, or walking slowly down the tow-path.

“ He kept us waiting for a long time, but at

last he came raging down, bare-legged and bare-headed, at a racing pace; and I said to myself, 'I should like to see some of these University oars.' The waterman and I got our elbows up and went after him, and, as we went, I heard muttered exclamations of wonder and admiration. I felt as if I was the proprietor of a show.

"He went down to the starting-post and rowed over, steered by the waterman. As we neared the barges we found others running with us, and Roland rowing more splendidly every minute. His last rapid rush home was Imperial—with a large I.

"When he stopped, there was perfect silence among the boat-builders and watermen. They were bent, as I have understood, on business, and were none of them inclined to commit themselves. I said to the man—a most respectable tradesman, as rich as you, I believe—who had let the boat to us, 'My brother rows well for a Freshman.' He answered, 'I have not time to build him a boat, sir, but would earnestly beg him to use the one he is in, and not change.' I thought, of course, that he was afraid of our going to his rival over the water,

till that rival came to me, and said: 'I should be glad of your custom, sir, but do urge your brother to stay in that boat. I have no boat in which he could show his form as well as in that. Beg him, sir, not to train down; it is only a fortnight to the race.'

"I was utterly puzzled at all this, and looked for Roland. He had locked his boat to a punt in front of the University barge, and was talking to Jasper Meredith, who lay in it on cushions. I hailed them, and they took me in. I told them what I had heard. Jasper answered:

"'I have been trying to persuade your brother from entering for the boat-race,' said he to me. 'His answer is that he will not run against these older men. I watched you two this morning, and crutched it down to follow you, and see Roland row—a thing which delights me—and I have few pleasures. And I have been here, and heard those cads making bets on our own Roland; discussing the points in his body, as if he were a horse—his legs, his arms, his chest, his thighs—nay more, his manner of living, and his morality. All I can say is,

that the whole business was unmeasurably indecent. Since the days of Commodus, there was never such a thing done as for Roland to go down into the arena. It is a pleasure to *me* to see him row, but if he had heard the expressions those cads used about him, he would never row again as long as he lived.'

“ ‘You are looking only at one side of the question,’ said Roland. ‘I only match myself against another gentleman.’

“ ‘Yes; but on what terms,’ said Jasper. I heard one of them say, ‘If a cove could only persuade him to train, what a pot of money a fellow might put on.’ He did not say ‘fellow,’ but I spare your ears. And Roland has dropped to this!’

“ Roland, laughing, said: ‘I am not sure that I am going to row, and I don’t think I am going to win. I only know that I am not going to bet.’ And he shot away and left us.

“ But he rowed and he won. He had infinitely the worst side, and Jimmy Mordaunt and I ran through the Meadows with punts over the ditches, to steer him. The thing was easily done. Roland rowed his man—a Hen-

ley winner—down, and after the first half mile, kept him working on his wash. Although he had scrupulously practised in public, few believed in him against the Henley winner, and the cheers were very slight. He came into the University-berge, as did the other man, and they got locked together. Roland said: ‘we cannot all win, sir. I am sorry you have lost, but I am glad I have won.’ The other man said: ‘I give you my shoes, sir, and I think you will wear them well.’ And then I took Roland out of his boat, and put the waterman in, and we stood alone on the berge.

“Not a soul knew us personally, and so not a soul would speak to us. We wanted to get the cup, but did not know whom to ask about it. We were not likely to speak to men who would not speak to us, and there we stood like fools; Roland, in breeches, with his legs bare (for these barbarians row in trousers). How long we should have stood I cannot say, but the President came, parting the throng, and made Roland’s acquaintance.

“His influence here is so great that it broke the ice at once. He had actually called on us

that morning, it seemed, which gave him the right of introducing us. So one happy result of the race is that we, with our charming manners, and our splendid personal appearance, have a new world opened to us. I was not aware, until I went to other colleges, that our college was a marked and disliked one; but it is. So much for Roland's boat-race.

“On the meadows we picked up Jasper Meredith, and, strangely enough, the young man to whom I gave ten shillings, who is now one of his servants. ‘For heaven's sake,’ said Jasper, ‘don't begin talking of the boat-race. I am sorry he has won. Give me the address of this man, if you know it. He is a friend of yours.’ He wanted the address of Allan Gray, for what purpose I did not ask him. Send it to him, for I have not got it. He has moved.”

CHAPTER X.

SEE Aunt Eleanor's writing-table in the bay-window once more, with a lady writing there—a lady, but not Aunt Eleanor. The light of the window fell, this time, on the head of the most delicate little fairy ever seen: on the head of the girl who had taken her aunt's place as the great Evans beauty: on the head of Mildred Evans.

The cross which the handsome Evans had made with the still more beautiful Meredith, had resulted in her, and she was very splendid indeed; very small, very fragile, very blonde, in every attitude graceful; yet not without a rather quick, decisive way of changing from one perfectly unstudied pose to another.

Without shadow; all light as morning; light in hair, light in sapphire eyes, light in her dress. She had dressed herself in white, and

she had got a pink rose from the garden and put it in her hair, and she had got a red rose and put it in her bosom, and had put a geranium and rose in a glass vase before her, and thus fortified, had sat down, at our unsympathetic Aunt Eleanor's desk, to write her innocent little love-letter, which the reader will be glad to be spared.

She had just finished when the door was opened widely, and in came Aunt Eleanor, in a riding-habit, accompanied by a girl, also in a riding-habit, who looked exceedingly like Aunt Eleanor's ghost.

A very tall girl, with a singularly upstanding carriage, and a well-set-on head, covered with fine brown hair, combed back into a knot; a very fine girl, very large and strong, but not in the least coarse. Ethel Mordaunt, of whom her brothers used to say that she was the greatest brick in England, whom Squire Charles was apt to pronounce a trifle coarse at times, though never within his sister's hearing, and whom Aunt Eleanor pronounced to be a perfect lady, far too good to marry any one except Eddy.

This young lady, still holding her riding-skirt

under her left arm, threw her whip on the table, and said :

“ You are the best judge, Miss Evans, being so much older and wiser than I am ; but even a girl just out of the schoolroom has an opinion, and my opinion is that you allow your good-nature to be abused in countenancing these two women.’”

“ I don’t encourage them. Mrs. Gray is most respectable.”

“ Is she ? ” said Miss Mordaunt ; “ ah, I dare say she is. But I don’t like her, for all that. I don’t like the way she talks to my brothers, for instance, though, perhaps, my brothers may. She is both familiar and slangy.”

“ I don’t know what you mean,” said Aunt Eleanor. “ Her grandson and herself were left in my care by my mother, and I have striven to do my duty by them ; and slangy is not a nice word, Ethel.”

“ My brothers use it,” said Ethel ; “ and then there is old Phillis Myrtle again.”

“ Mrs. Myrtle has her faults,” said Aunt Eleanor ; “ but these are matters which you cannot understand.”

“ Papa says she is a tipsy old thing,” said Miss Mordaunt. “ Look here, Miss Evans, see if here is not our sweet little bird, writing her love-letter, and dressed up in flowers to do so. What an innocent little love it is. Put it in strong, Milly, my love. Leave no doubt about the state of your sentiments, my dear. Don’t let him have the slightest doubt of your mutual relations, and let me read it after.”

“ It is sealed up,” said Mildred, turning round and laughing.

“ What a pity ! ” said Miss Mordaunt. “ I have seen a few of his, but I never saw one of yours. I should like to see one, because I don’t know how I shall have to write to your brother Eddy, when he, driven to exasperation by your aunt here, proposes to me. Do you ever write to Eddy ? ”

“ I am going to write now,” said Mildred.

“ Tell him that his aunt’s heart is set on our union, and that if he will summon up the courage to propose, I will have him—conditionally. He must add a cubit to his stature, to begin with ; and there are other conditions also. Will you write that for me ? That, do

you see, Miss Evans, will crown your kind plan.”

“I have no plan, now,” said Aunt Eleanor, and standing in her place, with her riding-skirt tucked up under her left arm, she looked steadily at Miss Mordaunt, standing in her place, also in the same attitude, and also looking steadily at Aunt Eleanor. But as she returned Aunt Eleanor’s stare, the veins in the girl’s throat began to swell and throb, and a flush spread upwards over her face, until that face was scarlet. At which time, Aunt Eleanor went up and patted her on the shoulder, and said in her ear, “It was so with me once, my dear, long ago, long ago; that is the reason why I never married.”

The girl said nothing, but Mildred Evans, turning round from the table, said, suddenly:

“I have got a letter also from Roland.”

The blood fled back from Ethel Mordaunt’s face as fast as it had come, and told the story full well—the story which Aunt Eleanor had nearly guessed that afternoon, during their ride. An old story, and generally a sad one, of childish friendship ripening into love on the

woman's part, but only into kindly, friendly indifference on the man's. "She loves him," thought Aunt Eleanor, "and I shall never prate her out of it. No one ever prated me out of it, even after I had *her* children on my knee. God help the poor child!"

Ethel Mordaunt had as well-cut and well-carved a head on her shoulders as had her brother James, whose carriage of his head has been before alluded to. This head was very nearly down on Aunt Eleanor's shoulder, but it was suddenly and imperiously drawn up again, and turned towards the door; for a footman opened that door and said, "If you please, ma'am, here is Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Myrtle."

Every fibre of Ethel Mordaunt's body became rigid as these two women appeared. "Send beauty away," she said, almost imperiously, pointing with her head, negro fashion, to Mildred Evans. "It is not fit that she should breathe the atmosphere with these two."

Aunt Eleanor chuckled internally, but did not let her laughter show outwardly. "Mildred," she said, "would you kindly be so good

as to go and see whether the——I mean, be so good as to go upstairs and look out of the window and see if——but I cannot do it. Would you be so kind as to take yourself out of the way, my dear ?”

“I can understand that, Aunt,” said Mildred, laughing, and slid out of the room, with her precious letter in her hand, making two pretty little obeisances to Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Phillis Myrtle as she went out, which those good ladies returned with deep reverences.

“Now you go too,” said Aunt Eleanor.

“I am going to stop where I am,” said Ethel Mordaunt.

“What is not fit company for her is not fit company for you.”

“Nevertheless, I am going to stop where I am. I am clever, and wish to study character.”

“You will go, if I tell you to go,” said Aunt Eleanor.

“Of course ; now have them in.”

And they came in. Two very different-looking women, Mrs. Gray first. A tall old woman, with the remains of a certain kind of aquiline beauty, very upright in her carriage,

and an expression in her face—a look of cool, careless impudence, which might either take the form of contemptuous badinage, or of utter scorn. She was very well dressed, and in good material; but her whole appearance, striking as it was, was utterly repugnant both to Eleanor and Miss Mordaunt, for different reasons.

Phyllis Myrtle was an entirely different person. A little, round-about old lady, with an apple face and a perpetual smile. To Eleanor she was possibly more repugnant than Mrs. Gray.

It was natural that these two women should be utterly repugnant to her, even if they had been the most estimable characters in the world. These two women were the only two left who knew of, or cared to remember, her brother Charles's escapade with Elsie Gray. It was a secret between them, though it was never mentioned at all; neither of the three knew how much the other knew. Who knew most, we shall see.

It was a life-long annoyance for a very high-souled woman, impatient of control, to keep this secret with two such women; yet it had to be kept, for these women had the power of

annoying her brother seriously. Squire Charles had done well by Mrs. Gray. She lived in a cottage rent-free, and had a fixed allowance, but the cottage was Eleanor's, and the allowance was paid by Eleanor's hand. Once, and once only, had the Squire spoken to Mrs. Gray after his return from India, and that was to say, "Mrs. Gray, our more recent intercourse was a very sad one; I think that the wisest thing we can do is to forget one another." And Mrs. Gray said, "Your honour shall be obeyed." Nothing more; and had accepted her position quite quietly, merely curtseying to the Squire when they met. Here she was now with old Phillis Myrtle, the nurse, staring fixedly and boldly at Miss Mordaunt, as if she was weighing or appraising her, and here was Miss Mordaunt looking out of window instead of returning her gaze, and drumming with her horse-whip.

"I am afraid I have kept you waiting," began Eleanor.

"Not at all, miss; I have been accustomed to wait on gentlefolks all my life, and my husband's family have been vassals to yours

for centuries. Coming from the manufacturing counties as I do, this vassalage seemed strange at first, but I have got used to it. The world uses you well, Miss Eleanor, and I hope it will use you as well, Miss Mordaunt, when you are as old as Miss Eleanor. Why, miss, you are three-and-forty; you must think of marrying soon."

"I am sorry to say that I *am* three-and-forty, my good Gray; and as for thinking of marrying, I have thought of that all my life, and the more I think of it the less I like it."

It was so good-humouredly said that Mrs. Gray smiled a gaunt smile, and continued the conversation with Miss Mordaunt, who, by-the-bye, had not said one word.

"You will poison Miss Mordaunt's mind against marriage, Miss Eleanor," she went on, audaciously. "Beauty like hers should not go unsued. Mordaunts and Evanses must not fail in the land; beauty, worth, valour, perfect openness, and perfect truth, are too good qualities to be lost in the land; and where are they to be found unless among Mordaunts and Evanses? Ah! we may see Miss Mordaunt

mistress of Stretton yet." Whereupon Miss Ethel, with her crest in the air, marched out of the room, with her riding-habit under her arm, and a look of high, cool, unutterable contempt on her face. "I will come back, Miss Evans, when this woman is gone," she said; but she might have gone up-stairs without bruising her clenched hand against the banisters.

"Mrs. Gray," said Eleanor, angrily, "you are taking great liberties."

"Only with a Mordaunt. I love it; I love to make one of those snake-headed Mordaunts put their heads in the air, like an adder just before he strikes; I do it with the boys. They are a red-handed old lot. Why, that youngest one, Jimmy, *her* brother, nigh tortured your own nephew, Edward, to death at school, that *you* know. Mad love and bitter hate. I love to play with a Mordaunt. Ha! ha!"

"I'll trouble you not to play with an Evans, if you please," said Eleanor, calmly furious.

"No! no! not with a she-Evans. They get their stuff from the Merediths. Do you remember your mother? Ah! to see her bare-headed, with her hands held up over her head

—well, don't look like that. She was a Meredith, and so are you; your brother is an Evans. All the men-Evanses are soft; you can do anything with 'em you like, except resist them when they plead. Your brother took two of my sons to Waterloo, and only brought back one. They would have gone to the devil after him—and then—why, and then another man-Evans, your nephew Edward, kisses you, strokes your hair, calls you his foolish old woman, and makes you, a woman of spirit, do just as he pleases. And he will live to break your heart as his father broke mine. You wait till you are old, and see him spending your hard-earned money on them that will despise you. Wait till you see him getting impatient for your death, and then remember my words."

Aunt Eleanor rose. "Now look here, Mrs. Gray, and have the goodness to attend to me. I am not going to have this, or anything in the remotest degree approaching to it, for one instant. Go out!"

"You had better hear my errand first."

"I will not speak to you. Go out!"

“ You may get your servants to turn me out if you like,” began Mrs. Gray.

“ I shall not get my servants to do it ; I shall do it myself in less than half a minute,” said Aunt Eleanor. And as she rose she looked so extremely like doing it, that Mrs. Gray turned round, not one bit abashed, and broke into a loud laugh.

“ I’ll go,” she said ; “ and I’ll hold my tongue, too. This woman will tell you what we came about. There is no bad blood between us, Eleanor ; I like you the better for your anger.” And she was gone.

“ The old *witch*,” said Aunt Eleanor, dropping back in her chair. “ For her to have dared ——”

A low sigh, and a dropping, or rather dribbling, of honey-sweet words reminded her that Phillis Myrtle was still seated in the easiest of easy-chairs, rolling her head from one side to the other, and using her pocket handkerchief.

“ You may well say dared, my dear young lady,” began Mrs. Myrtle : “ audacious as dear Mrs. Gray can be, I never thought she’d have

burst out on this day of all days in the year. And witch you may well say, Miss Eleanor: witch she would be if she could, for I have watched her. But it ain't biling things in a pipkin as makes a witch—no, my dear, Lord forbid! If she has asked me for black spells once, she has asked me a dozen times, and I replied to her, 'Mrs. Gray, I don't use them; I am old, and I think of my soul!' And she had said to me, 'But, you fool, you know them,' as, heaven help me, I do. And I have set her off with white spells,* for bunions and king's evil. But now she is going for good and all, and how her pious grandson will like it, I can't say.

“As I was saying, my dear young lady, she comes to me, and she says, 'You half-hearted witch,' she says, 'he will have you all the same, if you won't give me a black spell. If you won't let me make acquaintance with your master, at all events give me a white one. And I said I would do anything neighbourly, not against

* All this is going on in the present day, and there are educated men who believe that Mr. Home was carried round the ceiling of the room.

my conscience, only that I should want a new crown-piece. Then she told me what she wanted. She says, in her own words, 'I want a love-spell. That girl Ethel Mordaunt is in love with young Roland Evans, for I have watched them, and he don't care for her. And I want something to put in his wine, or his drink, to make him love her; for there will be mischief afoot if he marries her before they have studied one another's character. They will fight for the mastery, and there will be your master to pay.' And I gave her some dill-water, and she put it in his drink."

Eleanor groaned. The secret she had found out that day was known to this terrible Mrs. Gray; and how many others?

"Therefore, my dear young lady, it is as well that she goes away. It is indeed."

"Is she going away?"

"Her grandson has offered her a home in London, my dear young lady, and she goes to him, and a nice mess they will make of it together."

"Did you two come here to tell me of this to-day?" asked Eleanor.

“ Yes, my dear lady, partly. And partly to ask if I might have her cottage. There is no one but us two knows anything, and no one but I and yourself, and your dear mother, now in glory, and the Squire as knows a certain part of the truth ; and there is no one but my own self knows the whole and entire truth. *She* thinks she does, but she don't. The Lord help you, if she did.”

“ What do you mean by the whole truth, Mrs. Myrtle ?” said Eleanor.

“ Parcelling all together,” said Mrs. Myrtle. “ Not parts and parcels, but the whole biling.”

“ Well,” said Aunt Eleanor, rubbing her nose, “ I suppose you had better have the cottage rent-free. I need not mince matters with you. It is of great importance that my brother's first marriage should not be talked of ——”

That silly old trot, Phillis Myrtle, was down on her knees before her in an instant. “ She don't know of that, my lady. Oh ! for heaven's sake keep it from her for ever.”

“ Does she believe my brother a villain, then ?” said Eleanor, indignantly.

“ Oh ! let her believe so, my lady. Oh ! for

the sake of the mother that bore you, and the brother you love, let her believe so. Listen to me, a foolish old woman. Think of what her claims would be if she knew it; and nobody knows *that* much but you and I—no one alive. Think, dear Miss Eleanor, what would be the effect of bringing it up now—how Squire Charles had made a shameful marriage in Scotland over the broomstick, but legal. Think of what Madam Evans would say when she found it had been kept from her. Think of the effect on the boys. Think of my darling Roland, whom I nursed, how his head would be bowed; and think of your poor little Eddy. Think of him, miss. Don't let that woman think there was a marriage. You have concealed before. Go on concealing: it is no new sin. Think of Eddy, miss."

"You plead well," said Aunt Eleanor. "I think you are an affectionate woman, though you must own yourself to be a great fool. Will that woman, Gray, speak, think you?"

"No, my lady; she is too proud; and she don't know all. I did not think as you knew as much as you did. I thought you thought

as she thought. But I am the only one that knows all. Leave well alone, my lady."

"Leave ill alone, you mean. Well, I suppose I had better. You can have the cottage."

"Well, aunt," said Mildred, coming in with her arm round Ethel's waist, "are the two wretches gone?"

"Don't talk to me for a time, you two. Kiss, play, fall in love, quarrel, do anything you like, but never give yourselves to a deceit. It will grow out of a little lie, like the thin clouds of summer, darkening and darkening, till it breaks, in ruin and confusion."

CHAPTER XI.

STRETTON Castle lay on the north side of the valley, under Longmynd; Mordaunt Royal lay upon the south side, nearly facing it, with Caradoc at its back.

When the Evanses and the Mordaunts first came into that part of the country, and began quarrelling, is lost in the mist of antiquity. All down through the history of the county, however, you will find that the Evanses and the Mordaunts did nothing but squabble, and now and then intermarry, mainly for the purpose of patching up a worse quarrel than usual. There was, however, generally such a furious hurly-burly about marriage settlements, dower lands, appanages, and so forth, that the remedy had been found to be worse than the disease, and had been tacitly abandoned. These disputes had been settled with lance in the tilting-

ground, with rapier in the meadow, and with red tape in Chancery; but at last the old jealousies and disputes had died out, and they were exceedingly good friends. The last case of enmity between the houses was when James Mordaunt so shamefully bullied Eddy Evans at Gloucester. Even that was past and gone now.

In the great civil war, the then Evans had declared for Parliament—and, of course, the then Mordaunt for King. This was a very pretty quarrel indeed, and the great statesman tried to utilize it; not knowing, as the Maynards and Merediths, or any Shropshire folks, could have told him, that the Evanses and Mordaunts only quarrelled between themselves, and that, in case of an Evans or a Mordaunt being assailed in any way by an outsider (even a Maynard or a Meredith), the other family would at once fly to the rescue, and defy creation. Consequently, during the Revolution, the Evans of those times did nothing more than watch his pestilent neighbour, Mordaunt; and during the Restoration, Mordaunt did nothing more than go bail for his traitorous neighbour,

Evans. Obligations in this way were mutual ; and what is more to the purpose, they both kept their lands under their feet, their heads on their shoulders, and what concerns us most, their houses over their heads.

So that now, as of old, Stretton stood a little up the hill—a long mass of dark grey, blazing with roses, with an oak wood behind it, and sheets of moorland rising behind ; while before it, the deer-park stooped down, like a cascade of green turf, into the valley, unaltered since the time of Henry VII. For a similar reason, the dark red-brick, James the First house of Mordaunt, buried among its dense elms and oaks, on the other side of the valley, kept its form unaltered through all political changes.

Either house, or either estate, were possessions which, to poor folks, seem almost fabulous. Yet there are thousands as good, or much better, to be seen anywhere. One of my neighbours, a commoner, has £20,000 a year ; another, just in sight, has £60,000 ; another, also a commoner, within four miles, has just died worth £5,000,000. The figures, with regard to the Evans and the Mordaunt pro-

perties, drop terribly from these real, every-day sums. Mr. Mordaunt was reputed to have about £7,000 a year, and Squire Charles Evans £8,000. We have only to do with the last estate, and I only mention figures to show that it was a very desirable one for a moderate man. Though not by any means as good as the "New York Herald," and but little better than Mr. Ward Beecher's church, it was worth fighting for.

There was a pleasant, orderly luxury about the place which was extremely agreeable, and was rather wonderful to contemplate, when one considered the beggarly income. It is perfectly certain that Charles Evans could never have done what he did with his limited means, but for one thing: he never went to London, except to lodgings, and Mrs. Evans did not dress.

But he did everything else. To begin with, he sat in Parliament, for one thing, three elections, which somewhat took the gloss off his income; and then he sat a fourth at a greater expense than before—an expense which made even him open his eyes, and brought in a

furious remonstrance from Eleanor. He sat, I say, a fourth time, for three weeks, after which time he was unseated in a scandalous manner. There was no doubt at all about it. Outraged Britannia held up her hands in sheer horror; and six thousand odd of good money gone to the bad for nothing! After this, Charles Evans retired into private life, cursing his attorney, consoling himself with the fact that "the other fellow" had spent more money than he had, and so let public affairs go to the deuce as they liked.

Consequently, although he kept the hounds at his own expense, his estate was not injured in any way. Hounds can be kept very well for £2,000 a year; and he kept them till he made the brilliant discovery that you could get as much sport out of them if you let some one else keep them, and only galloped after them yourself. So he gave up his hounds.

Then he bred race-horses, and, indeed, he won the Oaks, to Eleanor's intense exasperation. "Now we *are* done for," she said: "this is the finish and end of us at last." But she was deceived. Charles bred a colt, such a colt

as was never seen, and he, a consummate horseman, taught one of his stable-boys to ride it, and he won the Two Thousand,* and Eleanor gave the house up for lost; but no. He came back to her the next day, very quietly, and told her that he had sold his horse, with its engagements, for £5,000, and had netted £14,000 in bets. "You are not going on then," she said. "No," he answered; "it is so slow."

Sailing-yachts eat nothing, and so his yachting cost him little. And now that his Parliamentary career was done with and finished, his sole dissipation was his yacht at Aberystwith. His was a most desirable property, perfectly unencumbered, all ready for Roland, who seemed to be worthy of it.

Most worthy. The good Doctor's estimate of his character was being confirmed day by day. The Dean had gone out of his way to write to Squire Evans about his two sons: they were both of them patterns (in spite of a slight tendency to boisterousness), but Roland was a paragon. The schools, and consequently the

* The Caractacus Derby is an exact parallel.

world, were at his feet—he might do anything—there was never anything like him. Old Mordaunt wrote to his father: “Roly Evans has won the University sculls, and has made a blazes fine speech at the Union. I heard it. There ain’t a man to hold a candle to him here. He is getting petted and flattered; but I don’t think they will spoil him.”

Jim Mordaunt also wrote to his sister. I hardly know why, but I feel as if I was violating confidence in writing down what he wrote. It ran thus:—

“*He* has done a thing five hundred times greater than winning the University sculls—for my part I hate to see him rowing. The question before the house was the Eastern war, and the ultra-radicals were against it; and Roland got on his legs, on the Liberal side, and did so cast about his beautiful, furious words about national death and national dishonour, that he carried the house with him. You should have seen the way he raised his head and sent the well-thought-out syllogisms rattling through his white teeth: it was a sight! Johnny says that his logic was all fishy in the major term,

and that his whole argument was bosh; but you know Johnny. As for me, I would sooner hear Roland's buncombe than any one else's common sense. So would you, my sister. They are all flattering him, but they will never spoil him. I got up a fight with him and his brother to-night. Pretending to cut Eddy's hair, while I was flourishing the scissors I got the enclosed off *his* head. He is in an awful wax with me, for he has missed his curl: he little dreams where it has gone. Mind you never, under *any circumstances*, let him see it; he would never forgive me."

So after their successful two first terms they all came back, full of hope, health, and high spirits, to their two beautiful homes. I suspect that of all the men in the world, a young English country gentleman, of good name, of good repute, of tolerable intelligence, with good health, and of innocent life, has more chance of happiness than any other. Most human cares are impossible for him; he has plenty to do, plenty to think about, and his work is all laid ready to his hand. I cannot conceive of any man of finer chances than a rich young

squire—the world and its temptations seem put out of the way in his case; yet he frequently makes a fearful fiasco of it too.

There was no blot on the prospects of the young Mordaunts or the young Evanses on the morning after their arrival home, any more than there was a cloud in the June sky, which stretched overhead a sheet of glorious, cloudless blue. All possibilities of any disturbing causes seemed absolute nonsense. The chances were so infinitely in their favour. Money was to be had for the picking up; they had talents, prospects, health, high spirits; the world was theirs, in a way, if they cared to go into it and succeed; or if they failed, here were two homes of ancient peace ready for them to come back to. Misfortune, thanks to settled old order, seemed in their cases to have become impossible.

The Mordaunts had come over to breakfast with the Evanses, and Maynard was spending the first part of his vacation with them, for the purpose of being with his beloved Mildred Evans. Aunt Eleanor had come from Pulverbatch to see her darling Eddy; and so

they were all assembled in the morning room at Stretton.

Aunt Eleanor was the first person who sauntered out through the open window into the bright, blazing sun. The boys stayed behind eating more, and yet more, of marmalade and honey, and the others sat because they were contented, until at last Eddy cried out, "There is Aunt Eleanor having a row with Deacon Maedingaway;" and, indeed, Aunt Eleanor's usual expletive, "Fiddle-de-dee," was plainly borne to the ears of the assembled company.

"Let's go and hear the fun, you fellows," said the younger Mordaunt—a proposition which, as it stood, was innocent enough, but might have been carried out with less boisterousness. They need not all of them have rushed to the window at once. Likewise, there was no necessity of a free fight between Eddy Evans and young Mordaunt, which ended in Eddy being cast on his back in the middle of a bed of geraniums, with young Mordaunt atop of him. However, they soon were beside Aunt Eleanor, determined to back her

through thick and thin against Deacon Macdingaway. With which heed the younger Mordaunt, on arriving at the scene of action, by way of taking up a formidable position, said to Macdingaway, "She did nothing of the kind."

Macdingaway was the head Scotch gardener, who, in an evil moment for him, had confessed to one of these madcaps that he had held an office in his church, after which they had christened him "Deacon." He turned on young Mordaunt, and said, "Her ladyship threepit ——"

"That I emphatically deny," struck in Eddy, who had got his breath.

"Her ladyship threepit that the roses should no have been budded till the first week in July," said the inexorable Macdingaway; "and I took the liberty to disagree with her."

"That alters the case altogether, of course," said Eddy. "You are quite right, Deacon. Aunt, you have not got a leg to stand on, you know. You had better leave him alone: he has much the best of the argument. Here are the others: let us come to them."

As they went away from him, old Macding-away shook his clever old head. "A' folly together," he said. "If your father had na lived before ye, where would ye be?"

All the others were now standing on the terrace. Squire Charles Evans, a handsome man of fifty, in a short velvet coat, perfectly cut trousers and well-made lace-up boots; very grey, with slight grey whiskers and moustache. Squire Mordaunt, a full-necked, brown-faced, thickset man, without a hair on his face, in grey breeches and gaiters, with a grey shooting-coat. He was a very bucolic-looking man, this Squire Mordaunt, but he had a shrewd, deep-set eye under his heavy eyebrows too. He stood looking at the group as they approached, with his head thrust forward, and his hands holding a whip (for he had ridden over), behind his back, and he was the first who spoke.

"What new trouble has my friend Miss Evans been getting into?" he asked, in a rather grating voice. "She seems to be borne back in triumph from some new victory by these four foolish boys."

"Nothing but a dispute with my dear friend

and admirer, Macdingaway, George Mordaunt," she replied, with her head in the air; "nothing worse than that *this* time."

"I am glad of that," said Squire Mordaunt. "Edward, you can come out of your aunt's pocket. My dear Miss Evans, once more, will you let me have that right of way through your two orchards for watering my horses at Gweline Farm?"

"No, I won't," said Aunt Eleanor, with a dangerous look in her face. Stroking Edward's bare curls, who, although he was not in her pocket, was certainly leaning idly against her. "No, I won't."

"But why not, my dear Miss Evans?" said Squire Mordaunt.

"Because *you* ask me, and because you ask me with that look in your face. I would sooner let every gipsy on the country-side camp there than let one of your dogs through, if you look at me like that, and ask me like that, now then! What do you think of that, for instance?"

The other boys had heard nothing of this; but Mrs. Evans, who was *en passant* a pretty

woman, and Mrs. Mordaunt, who was not pretty, but clever, interposed.

“Surely,” said Mrs. Mordaunt, “I shall have to quote Dame Quickly on you two some day. You cannot serve heaven well, that you never come together without quarrelling. Do be quiet.”

“A wilful woman must have her way,” said Squire Mordaunt.

“And indeed she must,” said Aunt Eleanor; “you never said a truer word than that. I am going after the boys.”

Young Maynard and Mildred Evans had marched off, and were courting somewhere or another; there remained only the four boys and Ethel Mordaunt, who were standing together, and apparently all talking at once. The Mordaunts, with the exception of Mrs. Mordaunt, had ridden over, and so Ethel Mordaunt was in her riding-habit, though bare-headed. Aunt Eleanor, as she approached them, heard that the four boys were discussing what they would do with themselves on this happy summer's day, and saw that Ethel was listening to them: she, also in her riding-habit and bare-headed,

stooped, and pretended to weed one of Macdingaway's well-weeded flower-beds.

"I vote," said young Eddy, "that we ride into Shrewsbury, have ices, and see the boats go. And we might buy a piece of salmon, and Jimmy Mordaunt might bring it home in his pocket."

"I wouldn't be a fool if I was in your place," said the younger Mordaunt. "You have had plenty of opportunities of eating yourself blind at the University; and I am sure we have had boating enough."

"Let us go fish," said the elder Mordaunt. "What do you say, Roland?"

"It is too bright for fishing, Johnny," said Roland; "I'll tell you what *I* should be inclined to propose. Let us take Rory, our old Irish pointer, and ride away over the Longmynd and see what grouse there are. What do you think, Ethel?"

"I think that would be very pleasant," said Ethel.

"It is certainly an improvement on Eddy's proposal of eating ices in Shrewsbury, and also an improvement on Johnny's equally idiotic

idea of going fishing. I am for it," said young Mordaunt.

"Do you think, Johnny," said Ethel to her elder brother—"do you think that *I* might come?"

"No," shouted young Mordaunt; "we don't want a parcel of girls with us."

Young Mordaunt had said this in sheer recklessness, expecting that his sister, as her wont was, would have given it to him. He was rather astonished, and very much ashamed, when his imperial sister turned gently to him and said:

"I won't be much in your way, Jimmy. I can ride as far and as fast as any of you. And you too have been a weary while away; let me see something of you now. Let me come, Jimmy."

"I believe," said young Mordaunt, impetuously, "that I am the greatest brute on earth; of course you are to come. I shouldn't go if you didn't. Come on, you fellows, and let us get the horses." And away they all went towards the stables.

And Ethel following, passed Aunt Eleanor,

pretending to weed a flower-bed, and Aunt Eleanor said :

“So you are bent on going with him then?”

And Ethel said, “I can’t help it. One long summer’s day beside him is not much to ask out of eternity.”

Aunt Eleanor said, “You are binding a burden for your back which you will find hard to carry before you have done with it. *I* know, and your father knows too: though he might have kept his tongue between his teeth this blessed day. Are you bent on going?”

“Oh yes, Miss Evans. Let me go!”

“I am not stopping you. Which way are you going to ride?”

“Over Longmynd, to look at the grouse.”

“And so on to Maynard Barton to lunch,” rejoined Aunt Eleanor. “Go, by all means.”

“They said nothing of Maynard Barton,” said Ethel. “We shall hardly get so far.”

“You foolish child,” said Aunt Eleanor. “Why, if you had set out this day to ride over Caradoc or Lawley, if you had set out to ride to the top of the Wrekin, your destination would have been the same. Roland can make

these boys go where he chooses, and sometime in the day you would have found yourselves by some excuse at Maynard Barton, and would have found Roland talking to Mary Maynard. Will you go now, you fool?"

"Yes! yes! It is twelve miles to Maynard Barton, and twelve miles is something. It would have been something to you once, Miss Evans."

"Heaven knows it would!" said Aunt Eleanor. "Well, my dear, when it is all over, and you want to eat your own heart in peace and quietness, come to the old woman at Pulverbatch, and begin a new life with her. You won't die over it, you know—you have too much chest, and are too active in your habits; but if you think you are going to get out of this without deep pain and misery, you are mistaken. See, they are calling for you. Run, my dear—and put the knife in delicately under your fifth rib."

She did not hear the last sentence; but running up to the door, found her mother with her hat ready for her, and immediately afterwards, having received a tremendous kiss of

reconciliation from her brother Jim, was pitched on her horse by him, and they all went away through the lanes towards the mountain.

The horses were of course good, and they all rode well (according to the English standard—a ridiculously low one compared with that of South America). They could, however, ride better than French people, and their horses were well trained and quiet: so they enjoyed themselves.

They were soon through the lanes, and out on the heather. Roland Evans and John Mordaunt rode in front, and the old pointer was sent out before them. Behind them rode abreast Eddy, Jim Mordaunt, and his sister Ethel, who were more than once cautioned by the two elders in front about making so much noise; for Eddy and Jim were furious and fantastic in their horse-play, and Ethel laughed loud and long at them. “They seem jolly behind there, those three,” said John Mordaunt.

“Very jolly. Keep quiet there: we shall have the birds up,” said Roland.

“Quiet there, Ethel,” said the elder Mordaunt, calling back to them.

The old dog had pointed five times on the south slope of the Longmynd, and had been whistled away. "There are at least four packs here," said Roland.

"And we are not half over the south side," said stolid old John Mordaunt. "We shall spot at least four or five packs more on this south side: send the dog on."

"I should like to try the north side," said Roland. "Have you any objection?"

"Not in the least," said the elder Mordaunt. "You mean towards Maynard Barton? I have not the slightest objection to going there or anywhere, so long as one understands where one is going. Northward, ho! you three jawers. We are going to beat among the bilberry slopes towards Maynard Barton. Ethel, you mind the blind ruts. We will lunch with old Mother Maynard, d'ye hear?"

"Are you going to Maynard Barton to lunch?" asked Roland.

"We had better, I think," said the elder Mordaunt. "We shall know how things stand."

"I don't understand you," said Roland.

"I don't think you do," said John Mordaunt.

“Twelve miles out of all eternity,” she said, and here was her reward. Not one single word from him during the whole ride; nothing but the tomfooleries of her brother and Eddy Evans. And at the last, when they found themselves dismounting in front of the low, dark-red façade of nearly the oldest and perhaps the most prosperous of Shropshire houses, only this for twelve miles’ ride. Mary Maynard, wonderfully pretty, and silly almost to idiotcy; and Roland bending over this doll, this fool, with his really fine genius flashing from his eyes.

Old Mrs. Maynard was the very mother you would have selected out of a dozen, as the mother of the strong, good-humoured, good-looking giant who was at that moment daundering about with Mildred Evans at Stretton. If you had to compare her to a flower it would be to a cabbage-rose, extremely beautiful, but rather stout—a rose which budded well, but which opened coarsely. Compare her to a bird, she was a pouter pigeon, full-breasted, fussy, affectionate, and never for one instant silent. She was a widow, and intensely interested in love-

making, as she was also in eating and drinking. She was in her flower-garden when our party appeared, and having given one glance at them, went swiftly indoors, and gave tremendous orders for lunch.

The elder Mordaunt, who had by far the oldest head on his shoulders of all our party, in spite of his blockish look, noticed that this good dame, whom he knew very well indeed, was a little distraught and not quite herself. He had reason to think that he might as well watch matters this day ; and he watched her.

Mary Maynard was out in the porch to receive them, and when they had dismounted, and were all standing about on the terrace, talking to one another, Mrs. Maynard rejoined them. Roland had gone at once to Mary Maynard, and they two were apart, laughing together ; and John Mordaunt, watching keenly, noticed that Mrs. Maynard on her arrival darted a sudden, quick, impatient, and yet puzzled look at Roland and Mary, but the next moment was all smiles. He wondered deeply, did this young man. "Hang it !" he said to himself, "The old girl ought to be satisfied with *that*."

“Now, this *is* good of you,” began Mrs. Maynard. “The very first day too: to come over all this way to see me. I need not ask where Robert is; I am sure he is where I wish him to be. Tell Mildred to send him over as soon as she can; a mother must wait under such circumstances—must she not, John Mordaunt? Roland, you have never paid your compliments to me. Come here and pay them—are these your university manners? Mary, go in and see that they are getting lunch. Roland, I was saying” (she was not) “that it was so good of you to come over and bring Ethel with you the very first day.”

“My brothers gave me leave to come,” said Ethel, quietly.

“To be sure, to be sure,” said Mrs. Maynard. “So kind of your brothers to bring you over the very first day. Well, well, come in, and we will see what there is to eat. Roland, give Ethel your arm.”

“Thank you, I am not lame,” said Ethel.

“Well, well! Lame! no indeed! Lame, she says; that is good; conceive a Mordaunt lame—no, no! Or an Evans either, for that

matter. Come into the drawing-room—it is rather dark coming out of the sun. I keep the sun out of the room to spare the carpet; for Robert will be bringing your sister here some day, Roland, and I must quit. Take care of the footstools, Ethel. Roland, she will break her neck; guide her.”

“I can see as well as Roland,” said Ethel; and they all sat down in the darkened drawing-room.

If it was difficult to keep Eddy Evans and Jim Mordaunt quiet in the class or lecture, it was hopelessly impossible to keep them quiet, without legal supervision, after a twelve miles' ride, when they were both petulantly expective of their victuals. They fell out instantaneously, and cast away the scabbard; and Ethel sat and laughed at them.

Eddy deliberated where he should sit down, and while he remained standing Jim Mordaunt remained standing also, with his eye fixed upon him; of which fact Eddy was not unconscious. At last he said, looking at a sofa, “I shall sit here.” Whereupon James Mordaunt bore down swiftly on that same sofa, saying, “I am

going to sit there." A tremendous single combat ensued, during which James Mordaunt, who was as strong as a bull, managed to take away Eddy Evans' watch, chain, and money, and transfer them to his own pocket. After which he sat quietly down in a chair by his sister, and called her attention to the pictures.

Eddy was beginning his plaint. "I have been robbed in your house by a ruffian, Mrs. Maynard, while my brother has sat and looked on," when he stopped, and every one started, Mrs. Maynard included; for a quiet voice out of a dark corner said,

"The boy, Mordaunt minor, will restore the property to Evans minor, and will write out the first book of Euclid." Whereupon the elder Mordaunt said to himself, "So *that's* her game: well, I have no objection, I am sure." And Mrs. Maynard said, somewhat querulously in spite of herself, "My dear Sir Jasper Meredith, how you frightened me! I thought you were gone."

"Gone, when I was ordered off. Why, no," said Sir Jasper Meredith. "I wanted to stay and see my friends. I shan't go without my

lunch now. Roland or Johnny Mordaunt, or any of you but Jimmy and Eddy, give my poor bones a hoist into the dining-room, for there is the butler announcing the viviers."

There was a general outcry of recognition, for he was a great favourite; and the bull-headed elder Mordaunt took him on one arm, and carrying his crutches in the other, carried him into the dining-room, and set him down between himself and his sister; James and Eddy skirmished in, Eddy, half begging, half fighting for the recovery of his property, and the rear was brought up by Roland and Mary, who sat side by side.

Not a soul spoke to Mrs. Maynard except in the way of politeness: matters were gone out of *her* hands, for good or for evil. Such of the company as glanced towards Roland and Mary might see that he was bending his face towards hers, and talking so low that no one could catch what he said, and that she was answering him by very few sentences, each of which was accompanied by a bland, vacant giggle. Eddy and James Mordaunt misconducted themselves as usual, James saying that

Eddy was over-eating himself, and Eddy saying that James was drinking too much wine. The spectacle of these two fresh, innocent lads, with their babyish horse-play of taking the food off one another's plates, might have been amusing at another time, but was passed without notice now. There were several anxious hearts at that table, and possibly the widow Maynard's was the most anxious of all; though, indeed, Ox Mordaunt, looking across Sir Jasper Meredith to his beautiful sister, was in his way anxious too. For Ethel, there was no anxiety shown in *her* face. When her bright clear eye was not looking down in pity and admiration on Sir Jasper Meredith, it was raised to her brother's honest broad head, and he could look back to her—well, as she asked her brother to look at her.

And with one of these glances of affection from brother to sister, across that unconscious cripple, Sir Jasper Meredith's head, there went this unspoken sentiment. "He *can't* be such a fool." Apparently, however, he was; for Mary Maynard and Roland were whispering and giggling down at the lower end of the

table, and Dame Maynard's brow grew darker and darker.

The only reasonable conversation at that table was that between John and Ethel Mordaunt, and Sir Jasper Meredith; the little baronet, lying, a heap of deformed bones, at the bottom of his chair, just able to feed himself, and no more, with the ox-like Mordaunt on one side, and the beautiful Ethel on the other; he considered himself in good company, and said so.

“There seems to be a strength comes into my bones when I sit between you two,” he said. “I wish you hadn't got any money, you two.”

“Why so?” said Ethel.

“Because then I could give you my money to sit alongside of me and talk to me, as you are doing now.”

“But we will do that without your money,” said Mordaunt. “And our conversation is not worth much.”

“You are not clever, you two; but then you are so good. I should like my Roland to be with me too, for he is handsome, and you are

not handsome, you know. At least, you are handsome, Miss Mordaunt, are you not?"

"Don't you think so?" said Ethel.

"I don't know, bless you," said Sir Jasper, "I am too blind to see you. I can see Roland's beauty when he is bare-headed by the shape of his head, and I cannot see your head for your hair."

"You are not so blind as you pretend to be," said John Mordaunt.

"Indeed I am. I can see nothing in quiescence; I can see things in motion well enough, and I am getting stronger in my sight. I like to see Roland row, though I abuse him for doing so."

"I think you are quite right," said old Mordaunt; "I back you up there. But this blindness of yours, there is a little affectation about it, is there not?"

"Well, perhaps a little," said Sir Jasper, laughing. "There are none so deaf as those who won't hear, and none so blind as those who won't see. And I won't see the girl who is giggling down there, charm her mother never so wisely."

“What! it is as I thought, then?” said John Mordaunt.

“I don’t know what you thought,” said the little cripple. “I only know that the estates come entirely into Robert Maynard’s hands on his coming of age, and that the widow Maynard, his mother, has only a fortune of £1,000 a-year, and that she and your future brother-in-law do not hit it off very well. I know, moreover, Miss Mordaunt, that Mrs. Maynard is so fond of good living and of a good establishment that she would sell her daughter to an articulate skeleton like myself to secure it; do you see?”

“I see perfectly,” said Ethel, in the coolest way in the world. “But surely the Evans’ connexion, which seems to be progressing so favourably there, will suit all parties.”

“It will suit all parties but one. Of course it is evident that Roland is desperately smitten with Mary Maynard; and it is equally obvious (although you may be disinclined to believe it) that she has sufficient mind of her own to prefer Beauty to the Beast. The only person that the Roland-Mary connexion would not suit would be the old woman.”

“He is a precious good catch for her,” said John Mordaunt.

“Yes, but he is not such a good catch as *me*,” said Sir Jasper. “Roland!—I have hardly patience at his impudence in daring to compete with *me* in a matter like this!—Roland has no qualifications comparable to mine. His father will live thirty years longer; mine is dead. In case of Mary’s marrying Roland, which seems, after to-day, certain, Mrs. Maynard will only have an elder son’s house to retire to; in case of Mary’s marrying me, she would have a house of 14,000 acres to retire to, and no one to stand in the way of her management but her own daughter, who is as clay in her hand, and a miserable cripple like myself, who cannot get up-stairs without his valet.”

“Mary Maynard must have a will of her own,” said Ethel, “or she would scarcely go on with Roland as she is doing, without her mother’s consent.”

“She is only allowed to do so to-day,” said Sir Jasper, “because I, steadily declining to come to book, Roland is kept as second string to the old woman’s bow. That old woman

would sell her daughter to the Cham of Tartary, and the girl would never wince at the bargain. Look at her with Roland now."

"She seems quite devoted to him indeed, and he to her. How pretty her ways are!"

"Very pretty indeed," said Sir Jasper. "You mean her pretty little way of turning her head up into his face when he speaks to her?"

Ethel said, "Yes."

"Ah, it is very pretty. I engaged a new groom the other day, and he was brought in to see his new master, and I saw the look on that young man's face when he first set eyes on this ruined heap of humanity, which his fellow-creatures call Sir Jasper Meredith. I saw repugnance in his honest, uneducated eyes, a repugnance which I have removed since. Yet, Miss Mordaunt, that pretty girl, now using her pretty ways to Roland, has been all this morning using them to the very same heap of disordered bones which is sitting beside you, and which shocked a coarse groom!"

"You don't shock us. We love you. And, therefore, why need you have shocked her?"

said Ethel. And the elder Mordaunt said, "Right, Ethel! Well said!"

Said Sir Jasper, airily, "There is not much to shock in her. However, you two hear me to the end. The old woman will have Roland if she can't get me, and she is not going to get me. And now, mark me: I will die in the workhouse (which, with my wealth, is improbable; or in the hospital, which is extremely probable, in case of my attempting the crossings at Hyde Park Corner, or at Farringdon Street, indeed I have made myself a life-governor of both institutions, with a view to such a contingency), but I will never let Roland's life—a life of such unexampled promise—be ruined by marrying that girl."

Could he hear Ethel's heart? Professor T—— tells us that a slight nervous twitch in one of his legs was enough to puzzle a party of spiritualists. If the good professor's legs are subject to such terrible nervous manifestations as Ethel Mordaunt's heart, we should be inclined to ask him, as a man we cannot do without, to give up his Alpine excursions. Her heart thumped, and beat, and throbbed in a

way to puzzle any number of spiritualists ; but the heap of bones lying in the chair beside her never heard it, and her face never betrayed it.

She said, very quietly, "Get me some of those cherries, Johnny ; not the May-Dukes, but the Morellas ; I like sour cherries. My dear Sir Jasper, if you would kindly take the trouble, at some leisure moment, to put it to yourself what extreme nonsense you have been talking, I think that your death-bed, whether it be at St. George's or Guy's, will be all the easier."

"As how, then, Beatrice ?" said Sir Jasper ; "give me some of your cherries, or tell him to get me some more. No ; I want yours ; your brother has picked out the best for you, and I want them. Hand them over."

"I will give them to you ; but it is not very polite of you to want them," said Ethel.

"I am not going to be polite," said Sir Jasper. "Disabuse your mind of the idea. I want your cherries. What were you going to ask me ?"

"I was going to point out to you the

nonsense you have been talking. You say that you will prevent this match from taking place, which is utterly foolish and wrong; and as a matter of curiosity, I should like to know what business it is of yours, and what means you are going to employ?"

"My reasons against the match are that I don't choose it to take place; and my means are—well, they are so numerous that I could not even give a catalogue raisonnée of them. But I won't have Roland's life destroyed by marrying that chit of a girl."

"How are you to stop it?" said John Mor-daunt. "It is gone too far for you, I doubt. Look at them now."

"Well, it *is* a strong flirtation," said Sir Jasper; "but I won't have it. At times I have thought of marrying the old woman myself (she would have me fast enough), and keeping the girl as an old maid for her to bully. At another time I have thought of opening Roland's eyes; but then he is decidedly in love with her, and would resent anything I said of her. At another time I have thought that if he had not been an idiot he would have fallen

in love with—with some one else. However, that is all over; there they go. Look at them. Confound—but it shan't be for all that."

"Looks as if it was all over," said bull-headed old Mordaunt; "does it not, Ethel?"

"It seems so," she said, quietly and naturally. "They have got their heads close together there in the garden, haven't they? Let us get up and go."

How much do cripples, and blind people, and deaf and dumb people, and people who are cut off from the ordinary means of human intercourse see or feel more than we do—who can say? Sir Jasper Meredith, lying there in his ruin, had some dim idea that there was something in the nature of a cloud, and the only way which he knew of dispersing a cloud was by the old Shrewsbury trick of nonsense.

There might have been a little cloud in her eyes; there might have been a slight tendency to expanding her bust, and casting her head back like a snake about to strike, which, according to Mrs. Gray, was a specialité of the Mordaunts. Sir Jasper Meredith could not say

why, but he felt it necessary, and more than that, imperatively necessary, that some one should talk nonsense to her. "She looks a deal too old for her age," he said to himself. "She does not like that arrangement. Let me make her laugh. It is impossible that she can care for Roland, and yet she is angry at this."

Ethel had risen, with her beautiful square head on one side, and her riding-habit gathered under her left arm, and had said, "It is time we went home." When Sir Jasper said, "My dear Miss Mordaunt, will you sit down again, for I wish to speak on a matter of business, and your brother being present, no time can be so good as this?"

Ethel sat down at once, and her brother ate cakes.

"I wanted to ask you, Miss Mordaunt," said Sir Jasper, "whether you would like to marry me, and become Lady Meredith?"

Ethel looked at him for one moment, but took time at her answer. She was puzzled for an instant, but she saw that he meant to please and amuse her, and she met him.

"You might do worse," she said, bending

her beautiful face towards the heap of bones, "and again you might do better; you might marry Mrs. Maynard, or her daughter. Give me your qualifications."

"Twenty thousand a year," said Sir Jasper.

"Nineteen thousand five hundred too much," said Ethel. "I shall marry a parish doctor, learn nursing, and get something to do. At any rate, I will not have a word to say to you. And, besides, sir, you are false and faithless, for you love another. No, sir."

Merely a wild random shot of nonsense, kindly meant; but she saw that her arrow had hit, and had gone deep. No one saw the slight spasm which passed over Sir Jasper's face as she said these words, and she held her tongue honourably.

"Mrs. Maynard," she said aloud, "Sir Jasper Meredith has just made me a proposal of marriage, which I have refused in the most peremptory manner. I really think that after such a dreadful ordeal as this, I ought to go to my mother—you always do go to your mother in a case of this kind, do you not? Assist me with your experience."

The experience of Mrs. Maynard was so different from that of this frank, bold, honest girl that she really had nothing to say. As for her having sufficient humour to see that the whole thing was a joke between two people who had been children together, and were mere brother and sister, that was not in her. She did not doubt that the thing had taken place, and that she saw before her a girl who had refused a man with twenty thousand a year, and coal under his property, and he a cripple, which was such an immense advantage. She was simply dumbfounded. She rang the bell, and ordered round the horses, and Sir Jasper took occasion to order his pony-carriage.

It was very awkward. No one spoke for a long time, until Sir Jasper, in a wicked croak, said, "Think twice over your decision, Miss Mordaunt. You will never get such another offer in your life. Just think an instant. Twenty thousand a year and a cripple! Think of that, a helpless cripple! Why, bless you, Miss Mordaunt, you are entirely unable to see the wonderful advantages which you are refusing. You have only to take away my

crutch, and you are absolute mistress. You could cut up my deer-park for the coal that's underneath it, and double your income, while I lay powerless on the sofa."

"It is of no use," said Ethel; and they all crowded out.

Young Evans and young Mordaunt could not, of course, mount without riot and confusion; but at last they were all fairly under way. Eleanor had been put on her horse by her elder brother, and had ridden forward with young Evans and young Mordaunt—ostensibly to pacify their great quarrel, in reality to aggravate it; for in her heart she loved nonsense and fun, as did Aunt Eleanor. James Mordaunt entirely refused to give up Edward Evans' watch and chain, although he had restored his money. On being appealed to by his sister to give up the watch, he replied that there were certain cases in which the ordinary laws of social morality were held in abeyance, and that this was one. He had thought the matter through, and had concluded to retain the watch, more particularly as was a better one than his own.

Old Mordaunt said to Roland Evans, "Well, old boy, I congratulate you."

"On what grounds, *Johanne mi?*" said Roland.

"On your engagement with Miss Maynard," said the ox.

"Are you mad?" asked Roland.

"Are you?" said old Mordaunt. "You *can't* be a humbug; but you may be an ass. Are you not engaged to her?"

"Certainly not," said Roland. "What could have put *that* into your head?"

"What put it into your head to keep it so close to hers, old fellow?" said old Mordaunt.

"I was only talking about her brother, who is to be married to my sister. There is nothing between us. The girl is a fool. Why, your sister Ethel is worth fifty of her."

"So I think myself," said old Mordaunt.

"But I don't want to be engaged to any one. *I* shall never marry, bless you."

"Then I would let that be understood," said old Mordaunt. "The girls say you are good-looking. I don't see it myself, but they

say so. And if you keep your head so close to Mary Maynard's as you did to-day, you ought to mean something."

"You are a perfect fool, Johnny," said Roland. "To prove what a perfect fool you are, I will go and do the same thing with your own sister. I suppose that I am not suspected *there*! Perhaps you would like to get up a scandal between Eddy and Aunt Eleanor. I leave you to your thoughts."

He went forward and detached Ethel from the squabbling lads. He rode beside her all the way home, and he led her away from the others. He called the old pointer to him, and on the north side of Longmynd he took her down a little glen, alone. The old dog stood, and Roland, laying his hand on Ethel's, guided her horse gently in front of the dog, until he showed her the old grouse, swelled out with indignation, in the heather, and the chicks running after her, "peet! peet! peet!" "Is it not a pretty sight?" he said, with his hand still on hers, looking into her face.

It was a very pretty sight indeed, that beautifully imperial head, with the large specu-

lative eyes. He did not mean that. He was speaking of the grouse-poults.

“It is a very pretty sight,” she said. “We had better go home now we have seen it.”

“I am sure that it was a pretty sight,” said Roland, “for the beauty of it is reflected on your face. Good gracious! don’t tell your brother that I said that, or he will be wanting to make out that I am in love with *you* next. He has accused me of being engaged to Mary Maynard this blessed day. After that he is capable of saying anything.”

“Then there is no truth about this between you and Mary Maynard?”

“No more than there is between you and me,” said Roland. “Why, she is practically my sister.”

Ethel might have wished it otherwise, but she was quite contented on the whole. So on the long summer afternoon she rode beside the man she loved, her loveless lover, through the heather—idle, foolish, aimless.

Come elsewhere with me, if you please. We have had nearly enough of these silly, orna-

mental people for the present. Let us see how another life or two, with the most important bearing on these summer butterflies, are wearing on. Keep, please, in your mind, the picture of beautiful Ethel, and the beautiful Roland; she loving him beyond everything created; he not loving her better than his pretty brother Eddy, or young Jim Mordaunt. Leave those two sitting on their horses, whose knees were bathed in the summer heather, and come away with me elsewhere—into the squalor of London.

CHAPTER XII.

THIS life of the rich English country gentleman would seem wonderfully beautiful. In a well-set, well-ordered, well-trained house of this kind, you get almost all the things which are supposed by ordinary people to make life valuable. To begin with, you get rules of life and conduct, in which you believe, and which are easy to follow: the following of which (such as going to church in the morning and being as respectable as another generally) gives you the prestige of being a respectable person. Next you get an *entourage* of accumulated beauty and accumulated tradition. No one ever knows of the accumulated art-treasures in any old country-house, until a sleepy and tangled-headed housemaid burns it down. There you have enough to eat and drink; all of the best. There you have air, light, exercise. The

beauty of horses, the beauty of dogs, the beauty of your grass-lands in spring and of your corn-lands in summer. The beauty of your budding oaks in May, when the soft note of the wood-pigeon tones down the slightly vulgar and too vivid green, and the beauty of intertwining beech-twigs in winter, when the woodcock rises like some swift, dim, noiseless ghost, and you have to concentrate your whole intellect—all that is in you—into that second when you press your trigger, and the pretty innocent bird lies dead, with outstretched wings, on the dead leaves before you.

Then, again, there was a greater beauty and a greater charm than any of these things in a highly-toned English country gentleman's house. I mean the relations with servants; the relations between master and man, between mistress and maid. One would be inclined to think that no relations could be much more pleasant than those between a good master and a good servant. These things, like much else, have passed away; one only alludes to this relation in saying that the lives of such lads as the Evanses and the Mordaunts are more to be

envied, in many ways, than those of any lads in Europe.

Now we will leave these Evanses and Mor-daunts, and go to Camden Town.

That great outcome of one side of British genius is one of the first things which an intelligent foreigner should be taken to see. As an example of the national genius displayed in architecture, I conceive that it is unequalled in Europe, and also in America; and in this opinion I am confirmed, after consultation, by intelligent travellers, who go with me in saying that it is absolutely unique. There is a depth of vulgarity about it with which the Nevskoi Prospect and the Hausmann Boulevards compete but feebly. The Russian and the Frenchman have each made an effort at soulless, characterless vulgarity, but they have failed because they have brought in the element of size or bigness, the only thing which saves Niagara from being one of the ugliest cascades in the world. Now, in Camden Town we have surpassed ourselves. We have had the daring greatness to be little, mean, and low. We have banished all possibility of a man's ex-

pressing his character in the shape of his house; that is nothing—have not mere French prefects done the same? But we have done more. Over hundreds of acres we have adopted a style of house-building which is, I believe, actually unique in the history of the world. The will and genius of a nation often—nay, generally—expresses itself in architecture. Nineveh, Paris, San Francisco, St. Petersburg, Pitt Street, Sydney, the Pyramids, are all cases in point. With regard to Axum, of the Ethiopians, and Caracorum, of the Tartars, one has little reliable information, but I have no doubt that they would bear this out, and assist one in rendering the theory arguable, that the genius of a nation generally expresses itself in its houses.

It would be unwise to commit one's-self. With Chatsworth and Buckingham Palace before us, it could not be asserted that the very curious taste for gregarious vulgarity of opinion among the least vulgar, and really the most independent people in the world, has culminated at Camden Town. It is possible to say that, if Arminius were to see Camden Town,

he would remark, "Here is the genius of the English nation in bricks and mortar. Stone don't pay. You can't get at best more than four per cent. out of fair Ashlar, and you ought never to build under seven."

Yet there are about one million people, of good education, who live in these Philistine ghettos in London, and never grumble. Is there any reader who does not know some family living in one of these artistically abominable terraces—some family shut up, with not too much money, in a hideous brick box—a family which, in spite of its inartistic surroundings, exhibits every form of gentleness and goodness? Any reader who does not know such a family is exceptionally unfortunate.

Some, whose souls are elsewhere, never think of its being inartistic and squalid. Others, the people who habitually eat their hearts, beat against such a prison like caged tigers. Until his grandmother came to him, young Gray never thought of finding fault with the decent, quiet little home he had prepared for her. When she came, he wished she had never come, for he saw at once that she disliked

him, and only knew afresh that he disliked her; and now that she had come, she took good care to prove to him, not only that she disliked him, but that she hated Camden Town; and what was still more unfortunate, utterly hated his ways and his works. A glance at him would not be amiss.

I have heard this gentlest, tenderest, and least cruel of men compared to a bloodhound in face, because of a certain solemn and majestic carriage of the head, and a lofty, uplooking, speculative habit of the eyes, which the bloodhound has among dogs, above all other dogs. In mind, Gray certainly resembled the bloodhounds: in this, at least, being nearly the gentlest and kindest of created beings; here the fancied resemblance ceases. The bloodhound is the stupidest of dogs. Allan Gray had a very noble intellect.

I have described that wild, fierce boy (for he was little else), James Mordaunt, as carrying his head well; Allan Gray carried his as high as ever did James Mordaunt. They both carried them like men ready to strike; and when you consider that, from the utter dis-

similarity of their education, their utter divergence in every possible line of thought, these two youths *might* have had to strike one another, one would have prayed that they should be kept asunder. They were strangely brought together.

In stature, he was singularly tall and well made, though very slight. Even at his present age of thirty, he looked like forty—like a made man. In manner he was extremely precise; silent and courteous; in dress excessively neat.

Seeking about, scarcely guided at all, for a rule of life, he had found a certain very eminent clergyman among the Dissenters who had given him one which suited him so well, that he never departed from it. An entire faith in the verbal inspiration of the Bible; a resolute habit of self-examination and prayer; and an intense desire to do his whole duty towards every one in this world: these were his rules of life, and he followed them well, while Aunt Eleanor disliked him, and called him prig. Though, while she laughed, she said that the world would get on no worse for a few more of the same stamp.

His temper was naturally very quick indeed, but he soon discovered this and tamed it—you will never see it exhibited. The good and noble man who had done so much for him had an intense dislike of art in all forms, and his teaching in this respect had fallen on congenial soil in the case of Allan Gray. What with being naturally short-sighted, and what with having a very intense and practical mind, he was absolutely unable to understand the very word. Religiously, objects of art were strictly forbidden by the second commandment; practically, they were a dead and totally unprofitable loss of money, which might be given to all kinds of good works. He admired his little home in Camden Town as being neat and respectable, and as representing a great deal of sheer hard work and of trust from his employers. In the jewellery which passed under his hands he had taste—but not of his own. As we know, some boys, too stupid to learn their Euclid, actually learn it *by heart*, and pass examination in *that* singular way; so Allan Gray had actually learnt by rote what was in good taste and in bad, and was more

looked up to as an authority in that matter than any one in the shop.

Such a man brought to such a home his wild old fury of a grandmother; and in his honest, kindly loyalty, laid the whole of his hardly earned home at her feet.

For the first week they got on very well together indeed. He returned promptly from his business, and gave up his whole time to settling her and making her comfortable. It was at the end of the very first week, however, that the first jar occurred.

“As you are now comfortably settled, grandmother,” he said, at breakfast, “I need not come home so early. Indeed, I shall not be home before eleven.”

She merely shrugged her shoulders; but he saw that she did not like it. “I shall go to bed early,” she said. “I don’t care for looking out on the gas-lamps.”

“Can you not read, grandmother?”

“I have not got anything to read. I have read the newspaper, and I have nothing to read besides.”

“Have you read the book I gave you?”

“No. It is a religious book, which ought to be read by a religious woman, which I most decidedly am not, and don't mean to be. I'll go to bed and think of the fine old times.”

I think all women can be kind when they have given deep pain, even to a man they dislike. She saw such a look of hopeless pain in Allan Gray's face as he left the room to go to his business that she called him back.

“There, you silly lad,” she said, “don't mind what I say. You meant kindly by bringing me here, and we shall do very well. I came because I thought it would be a change, and I love change; and, heaven help me, I have got it; it is duller than the other place. Let us bear with one another, boy. I have money, and in a few years it will be yours.”

“You do not think I want your money, grandmother? I had not the wildest idea you had any.”

“Go to your work,” she said, imperiously; and he went.

When he was gone, she said, “I knew that he did not know that I had any. He is quite honest. I wish I had not come. Brick walls

for Caradoc ; a Methodist, or a pretended one, for my garden of beauties. Allan's Puritan crop and mutton-chop whiskers for Roland's curly head and Eddy's pretty eyes. Well, I am freer here."

Such was the life to which Allan Gray was condemned. Was it an unbeautiful or an unhappy one? I think that you will say that it was not. That it was a singular contrast to the very beautiful life of the Mordaunts, the Evanses and the Maynards, is most true. Camden Town is not Caradoc, nor Saffron Hill Longmynd; any more than Allan Gray, the toiler, was Roland Evans, handsome and strong, the favourite among favourites of fortune. Yet they were both happy men in their way. Both lived in the future; the one in a future of anticipated triumph; but Allan Gray's future went further than Roland's as yet. Allan's future went deep and far into the next world; his quiet fanaticism was as potent a means of taking him out of himself, as were Roland's dreams of triumphs in the Schools or the Senate. Roland's surroundings were as graceful and as beautiful as those of a Greek. Allan

Gray could dispense with them, nay, was even glad to do so, for he called them in his quaint language, "a snare." A man who is perfectly assured that in thirty years he will be walking in the City of the New Jerusalem, as described in the 21st of the Revelation, is not likely to care much about the inartistic squalor of Camden Town, even if he could appreciate it, which Allan Gray could not. The costermonger, against whose barrow this solemn young gentleman walked sometimes, and to whom this solemn "young swell" apologized, did not know that the tall young gentleman was thinking with his whole soul over the beatific vision. The Romish priest for whom Allan sent when he found that a soul was craving, on the verge of death, for the old offices which had given comfort before, little thought that the young man with the face like a bloodhound, who had so courteously handed over the dying man to him, went home to pray that the Scarlet Abomination might cease out of the land.

A most perfect fanatic—a man who was unable to appreciate any form of artistic beauty—a man given up to a business which he hated

and despised; and yet who had a flower-garden too; a garden also in which he could see his flowers grow. They were apt to wither and die, certainly; but he had heard that of all flower-gardens.

On this day, when he had first left his grandmother alone, he went first to his place of business, the jeweller's, and dashed at once into the books. The partners came to him once or twice on business, and he gave back their kindly smiles of courtesy and trust as frankly and as honestly as any man could. So he worked away at the dull figures, which were not dull to him, for he had his purpose, until nearly three o'clock in the day, and then uneasily began to hear the carriages pass. "I must go into Vanity Fair soon, I doubt," he said to himself.

He was quite right. A youth came in, and said, "If you please, Mr. Gray, Mr. Henry wants you." And Allan, with a sigh, arose and followed.

Mr. Henry was the youngest partner, Allan's old friend: he managed to brush past him. "Allan, my dear," he said, "to the rescue!

Father and uncle are both engaged, and here is the Duchess of Cheshire wanting loose opals and sapphires for setting."

"C. 16 and Q. 19," said Allan, in a whisper, and passed on, with his head in the air, for his interview with the Duchess, looking uncommonly like an ideal duke himself. What were principalities and powers to *him*!

"The stones will be here at once, your grace," he said, calmly. "One of the house has gone for them. May I take the liberty of inquiring whether it is your grace's intention to set the stones together?"

The Duchess said, "I had a design of doing so. I wanted to give my daughter, Lady Alice Barty, a necklace for her wedding. I thought they would look pure and innocent," said the natural woman. "I mean, I thought it would be in good taste," said the artificial one.

Allan bowed, and said, "They will be here directly, your grace." He was back for one instant among the sapphire, the sardonyx, the jasper, and the chalcedony of the New Jerusalem; but he had two existences: he was quite ready for her when she said—

“Do you think it will do?”

Now the Duchess of Cheshire was, in her old age, a very religious woman of a certain sect; and a very open-handed woman also, as more than one prophetic expounder of the Revelations well knew. Allan Gray knew it, but would have died sooner than trade on it: nevertheless, he gave this singularly odd answer, which, coming from a shop-manager to a Duchess, must have rather astounded her grace.

“It would scarcely do, your grace, as the taste of the world goes. And, as a general rule, you present to a young lady, on her real entrance into the world, something symbolical.”

“Yes,” said the old lady; “but sapphire represents the blue of heaven, and the cloud of onyx the troubles on earth.” For she had got rambling, too, and was thinking of the time when her son Charley was killed in the duel, and of other disasters since, and forgot that the solemn, imperial gentleman before her was only a shop “manager.”

“In the New Jerusalem, your grace,” said the shopman, quietly, “which we will pray

that the Lady Alice may enter, the gates were twelve pearls: why should not her ladyship have a twelve-fold *collier* of large pearls, with the other jewels interspersed? *That* would be really symbolical, I should fancy, under your grace's approbation, and at least Christian."

The astonished old lady could only say, "*Faut de mieux*—would the colours be in good taste?"

"They would be in St. John's taste," said Allan, with that curious confidence and audacity which few other sects possess now, and remained silent.

"It is really a beautiful idea," said the old lady. "Your house is famous for its good taste. I think I will say yes; I like your idea very much; you are evidently a good young man. Plan out the necklace for me." And she retired to her carriage, and talked all the evening, and for many evenings, of the wonderful young man at Morton's. And Lady Alice Barty wore that necklace on her wedding-day.

Meanwhile, Henry had been waiting with the sapphires and the opals, and seeing the Duchess depart, thought that they had missed

an order. "Why, the old lady is gone," he said.

"Have you any exceptionally large pearls?" asked Allan. "What a pity it is that we should have let the Googerat necklace go! I would give anything for those pearls now."

"Hang it! you can have them, if you want them. There was no cash produced. She is burst up, and they are in the safe now."

"That is well. Keep the twelve best. I suppose you never heard of Chrysopras?"

"Never," said the partner.

"We must try Giallo Antico," said Allan. "Get me these other stones, and don't disturb me, if you can help it. I will go and design this necklace; it is a large order for our house. Send the artist to me. 'And the street of the city was of pure gold, as it were transparent glass,'—that is, white enamel over gold. Send me the artist."

So the ultra-Protestant actually set to work to symbolize in his trade, in a gold necklace, the very thing which puzzles and awes the most advanced Christians. He was disturbed, if aught could disturb him.

Just before the shop's closing, he was called out again. This time he had to attend to a different kind of people. An evil man was buying jewels for a young girl, and the girl had had jewels bought for her before, and knew their value, and was so particular that Gray had to be called in again. He stood before these two quite quietly, and served them well, and gave them his advice, knowing that he was serving his employers. There were plenty of precedents in the Old Testament, which he read most, but fewer in the new, which he read least. Those two were as nothing to him. A hog comes to your gate, and you throw it an apple; the hog is nothing to you, and they were less than nothing to him.

"Now," he said to the three partners, as soon as the shop was shut, "I am going to walk in my garden."

"Does your garden take much to keep up, Gray?" said the senior partner.

"Well, it would cost more than I could afford, sir, if it were properly kept up."

"Now how much, for instance," said the senior partner—"to keep it going properly,

you know—do you think it would cost to keep your garden in order ?”

“The whole garden ?” asked Allan ; “I have only a share of it.”

“Say the whole garden, then,” said the senior partner.

“Well,” said Allan, “I could do something with £400,000 a-year, if I had the management of it. As it is, I do what I can.”

“We were going to increase your salary,” said the senior partner, laughing, “by £100 a-year, but I suppose that would not be much for your garden ?”

“Very little,” said Allan ; and then, remembering himself, added, “you are very kind to me. I thank you deeply. I will make good use of the money which you entrust to me from God.”

CHAPTER XIII.

ALLAN GRAY was walking swiftly away, with his face towards his flower-garden, when he heard himself hailed, and pausing, was overtaken by the junior partner.

“Here is a young gentleman wants you,” he said; “he has been waiting at the shop-door ever so long, and having given you up, came into the shop. I ran after you.”

“A young gentleman?”

“A regular young swell. He says that he knows you would speak to him if you saw him.”

Allan Gray, coming into the shop, saw a slight, deer-eyed youth before him, who held out his hand and said, “Allan, you have not forgotten me?”

It was Eddy Evans. The few demonstrations of kindly feeling which Englishmen allow

themselves were over in a moment. Their eyes did the rest, and then Eddy and Allan were alone in the street together.

“You had not forgotten me?” said Eddy.

“Was it likely that I could forget you? Did I not think you had forgotten me?” said Allan Gray.

“See, then,” said Eddy, with both his hands clasped over Allan’s arm, and his face turned up into the solemn face of the other, “how unfair you can be. Have I not deserted all pleasure, as they call it, to come here for the higher and more real pleasure of seeing you?”

Allan said nothing, but he somehow noticed Eddy’s hands, which were clasped over his left arm. Eddy’s hands were very small, and he had on the most beautifully made lemon-coloured kid-gloves.

These attracted Allan’s attention so much, that he took one of Eddy’s hands in his, and held it there, and passed his brown fingers up and down the seams, and said, “What pretty gloves!” For he loved the lad as much as he could love any one, and he permitted his love to demonstrate itself so far.

“I doubt you are an old brute,” said Edward. “You are not a bit glad to see me.”

“I am very happy,” said Allan.

“Yes, but you don’t show it,” said Eddy. “I am happy to see you again, but I don’t look like a——Memnon. I want to spend the evening with you. Where are you going?”

“I will go anywhere with you,” said Allan. “Where are *you* going?”

“I *was* going to dine at the Bedford with the others, and then we were going to the play, and then we were going to Cremorne. But I gave it all up to come to you, and you don’t care for me.”

“I care for you more than for any living being, Edward,” said Allan.

“Hush, man, I know you do,” said Edward. “Have I not come to you? Have I not proved that I, also, care for you—after Roland?”

“Friendships will settle in a few years,” said Allan. “We will see how this sentimental fondness for one another will settle itself. Which is a great problem.”

“Not such a great problem as this,” said Edward. “Where are you going to take me?”

“I *was* going to my flower-garden. Will you come? Dare you come?”

“I dare anything. I am an Evans, and I would sooner go to Newgate with you than to Vauxhall with another. I will come.”

“Then we will go. How did you come to London?”

“Our fathers gave us money to come and see the town, and we have come to see it; Roland, and Johnny and Jimmy Mordaunt, and I. And we have been to St. Paul’s, which is 404 feet in height; and to the Monument, which is 202; and to the Tower, which was built by Augustus the Stark, King of Saxony; and I found it very slow, for tastes vary. Indeed, Jim Mordaunt quarrelled violently with his brother on the same subject on the very summit and top of the dome of St. Paul’s, Jimmy declaring that any one could have built it if he had had the money, and Johnny accusing his brother of trying to be fine. I got sick of all this giddy dissipation, and asked

Roland for liberty. So he took away my money, and let me come to you.”

“Why did he take away your money?” asked Allan.

“He always does. I give it away when people ask me for it, and so does Jim Mordaunt. John Mordaunt used to take his brother’s money away until he got too big. Jim won’t stand it now, and fights.”

“You don’t fight Roland, then?”

“No, Roland does as he likes. Nobody ever could resist Roland, you know. Besides, he leaves me some. I have five shillings or more now.”

“How old are you, Edward Evans?”

“Seventeen.”

“You are very childish and simple. I doubt if we had better go where we are going—yet, we will go. Are you too great a child to share my pleasure? Why should I ask you? Let us come?”

The bright evening summer’s daylight fell full and strong upon the squalor of the streets through which they passed; streets which became more squalid, mean, and ugly, as they

passed along. In the darkness of the winter's evening their wretchedness is hidden; under the summer sun it is patent. Eddy chattered at first, but less and less as the streets got narrower and more dirty, and at the top of Saffron Hill he was quite silent.

For the people were so wild, so strange, and so very fierce. They scolded one another so much, and when they were civil to one another, their language was hard and wild; and to Eddy, listening with his keen little ears, it seemed that their conversation turned on two things only, money and drink.

"I don't like this place," said Eddy, very emphatically; "it is a bad place. I like pretty places and pretty things. What are those bells?"

"The big one?"

"Yes; the one like Tom."

"That is the bell of the Roman Catholics; they have established themselves here."

"Do they do good?"

"Every one who works for Christ does good," said Allan Gray, the extreme Protestant. "Of course, they do good. They work among these

Irish, whom they have, for their own purposes, kept sitting in outer darkness, and they do good. And they'd need."

"What is the little sharp bell?" said Eddy, getting interested.

"That is the Puseyite church," said Allan, with a smile. "We tried that together, you know, at Shrewsbury."

"I liked it," said Eddy; "you did not. Do they do good?"

"No end," answered Allan. "I get into trouble for saying so, though."

"Do you Low Church and Dissenters do good, Allan?"

"We think so; you must come and see. Stay here a moment; there is a row. Keep quiet."

The narrow steep lane before them was crowded with people of the very lowest order, all talking in that dreadful, hoarse, London voice, which, I confess, I have never heard elsewhere. As Allan and Eddy had been looking down that lane, they had seen it swarming with "roughs," male and female, intermingling, growling, and swearing; but now there was an incident. Ask the next policeman, or read your

newspaper, before you say that I exaggerate here.

From the door of one of the houses came stumbling, impelled by some blow from behind, a woman, bareheaded and mad, who recovered her balance in the middle of the street, and confronted the door from which she had come. Her fierce, bruised face, her demoniac fury, and her horrible wild words, made Eddy tremble and cling close to Allan. In another moment a man had dashed out of the door and confronted the woman, who was at bay, and the cowardly crowd parted. It was an Irish row, and they were man and wife. No one had a right to interfere.

Then began once more the fierce, wild objurgation, rising to a scream on the part of the woman and a roar on the part of the man, until there was an instant's silence, as he went at her. Then inarticulate curses, worse than the worst roar of any wild beast, as he seized her by the hair, cast her heavily down, and began kicking her on the head.

Not a soul of all the soulless cowards around interfered. They were Irish; the man was a

dangerous character ; and, moreover, they were man and wife. Not one soul interfered. Allan Gray uttered an oath which was strange to his vocabulary, and made a dash forward against the crowd ; but there was one more nimble than he.

While he was stopped disputing by three or four heavy costermongers — who had the strongest objection to any interference, on any grounds, between a man and his “missis,” Eddy, with that rapid dexterity which is gained at football and cricket, had parted the crowd—nay, had done more. He had delivered his two little fists straight into the eyes of the Irish gentleman, and was apparently prepared to do so once more.

It is impossible to say how the matter would have ended, for the woman had risen, and dazed and stunned as she was by her husband’s kicks on the head, had her wits enough about her to see that this youth before her husband was the youth who had saved her life by giving her husband two black eyes. She therefore found it necessary, according to the creed of her class, to entirely eradicate and destroy that youth. Having thrown a few flowers of speech

at our poor Eddy, she made a resolute advance towards him, and in another moment it would have fared badly with him—when Allan Gray, having been recognized by some among the crowd, there was a cry raised of “Teacher! Teacher!” and he was allowed to pass. With singular misfortune, he arrived just in time to get between Eddy and the infuriated Irishwoman. Eddy, who was expecting another attack from the husband, watched Allan Gray, and knew more about him than he had ever known before. Deep down in the man there was a strain of *humour*, utterly unsuspected by himself, but detected at once by headlong Eddy, who knew the article when he saw it, if ever a lad did.

The woman raged at him, with her ten nails spread out, blind in her wrath. Gray with great dexterity caught her two wrists in his hands, and said, quietly, “Now, my dear, good soul, do just think how very much at random you are acting.”

“Where’s the young man as hit him?” she said, slightly struggling. “Give me that young man!” And then she proceeded to describe what she intended to do to that ornamental

young undergraduate who had saved her from the brutality of her husband, with a degree of detail which cannot be reproduced here. Her object, it seems, was Eddy's lungs—she called them his "lights"—and garnished her speech with adjectives and participles. Her argument took the form of what a sporting paper might call "reiterated asseveration." She struggled a very little, for the poor thing was faint, and Allan Gray soon dropped her hands.

"Ah!" she said, "you're a teacher, I doubt; I didn't see you. But," with sudden vivacity, "I'll have out the liver of any chap that lays hands on my man! If they was a teacher's I would; if they was yours I would. He has been a good husband to me out of liquor, and I'll stand by him against ——." Aposeipesis is the best thing here.*

* One pretends to write "a story of real life." If one were to give the mere incidents of low London life, one would be accused of exaggeration. No publisher could be found who would print the language which one hears habitually about Saffron Hill. No one who has not been there knows what that district is. Lord Shaftesbury at Field Lane, and Mr. Mackonochie at St. Alban's, Holborn, are working and civilizing most nobly. God speed them both!

“What a very foolish woman you will find yourself, if you once have sufficient resolution to bring your mind to bear upon it, you know,” said Gray, with the most perfect temper. “You should bring your mind to bear on questions of this kind, and should not take action in this rapid and illogical manner. You should think the question out.”

“Where is the young man as interfered between me and my man? I’ll have that young man’s life, I will!” she went on, with that hoarse, thick, London voice, which most of us, alas! know.

“Now just think how foolishly you are talking,” said Allan Gray. “You would have been killed if he had not interfered, you know;” and the whole business was suddenly finished by a maudlin and tearful reconciliation between the man and his wife, not much less disgusting than the quarrel; after which, Eddy and Allan Gray walked on together.

“I don’t think much of your flower-garden as yet,” said Eddy; “these people are worse and more brutal than the country people.”

“They have a hundred times more indi-

viduality of character," said Gray, shortly; and Eddy, puzzled with the length of his words, passed into a whitewashed passage, at the end of which were stone stairs.

Eddy thought first of gaols, then of work-houses, then of hospitals, as they passed up flight after flight of stairs; but at last Gray opened a door, and there was a warm whiff of hot humanity, and an universal buzz of teaching and learning voices, and he thought at once of the old class-room at Gloucester.

"Where shall I go?" said he, to Allan Gray.

"Where God directs you," said Gray. "I must attend to my class; God will see after you. *This is my flower-garden.*"

A strange one. About three hundred present in a whitewashed room, of all ages, and nearly all degrees,* divided into classes. Gray having deserted him, Eddy the ornamental did what most shy English lads do when they find themselves in a social difficulty, took off his hat, and sat down in the first place he could find.

And what a queer place it was, and yet such

* We have had surgeons and engineers in Field Lane before now, and shall have them again.

a very familiar one. A young gentleman, in spectacles, was instructing a class of boys in Scripture history, and Eddy slipped in, on to the end of the form, as a kind of ornamental head-boy, used to the situation, and dropped from the skies. The instant he sat down on that bench the old school-fear was upon him, and the spectacled young gentleman of his own age was his dreaded master. That young gentleman looked at him through his spectacles, and Eddy trembled. But he had sat down at the head of the class, and was committed to anything. The young gentleman looked very much as if he would like to go through a biblical pedigree or so with him, and Eddy devoutly hoped that he wouldn't.

Looking at his fellow-pupils, Eddy saw that there were eight of them, and that these sons of the conquerors of India had developed their genius in the direction of dirt. Yet there was a striking similarity to the old Shrewsbury classes in the way they behaved. The furious, irrepressible boisterousness, of which the Dean of St. Paul's complained, was rampant enough here.

As Eddy sat and looked, he saw this. Two boys, utterly tired out, had gone to sleep one against the other. A very brisk boy, who was very creditably answering the Biblical questions of the spectacled young gentleman, perceived these two boys. After looking steadily at the young gentleman and at Eddy, to take them into his confidence, this boy, instead of answering his question, advanced across the floor, and taking the nose of the smaller of the sleeping boys between his finger and thumb, half wrung it off his face; after which, he went back to his place with the air of a boy who had done a dexterous thing, and continued to answer biblical questions in a way.

The young gentleman in the spectacles took no notice; and as for Eddy, it seemed to him that he was back again at a school, mastered by monitors. He was wondering whether or not he could "take down" the present teacher, or whether he could be taken down himself and everlastingly disgraced by the dirty boy who had pulled the sleeping boy's nose, when a trifling miscarriage on the part of this very lively boy got him relieved from his hideous

thrall. The young gentleman in the spectacles, doing good work, if ever a man did it, sacrificing time, pleasure, age, and not a little health also, in his self-imposed task of civilizing these boys, had found nothing better to teach them than obscure and very doubtful questions of theology. He saw in Eddy, with his dark-blue necktie, an Oxford man ; a congenital Puseyite, as he had been taught to believe, though Eddy was nothing of the kind. He therefore thought that he would air his boys' theology before Eddy, and send him back discomfited. The end was disaster.

“With regard to the true fold,” he said ; “who are the true fold ?”

“All faithful people,” said the lively boy who had pulled the other boy's nose.

“And for whom do we pray in this collect, that they may be brought into the fold ?”

The boy meant to say, for he was a sharp boy, and remembered, “All Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics.” What he *did* say was, “All Jews, turkeys, fiddlers, and architects.” After which Eddy fled.

There was at the end of the room, next the

door, a class which had no teacher at all ; Eddy, in sauntering past it, and looking very curiously at it, as he did at the others, was descried by them, and, so to speak, hailed.

“ Will you come here, sir ? We have not got any one,” said a bright-looking lad about his own age, who rose from the teacher’s chair with a Bible in his hand, and confronted Eddy ; who could but come, very frightened, with all his rings, and pins, and gew-gaws ; *he* sat down, took the Bible, and stared round him stupidly.

“ I don’t know anything about teaching,” he began, finding it was necessary to say something, “ but I know the Acts in Greek, and I have been used to class and lecture. Where are we ? ”

The bright-looking lad’s eyes somehow attracted his, and he addressed him.

“ We are on the voyage of St. Paul, sir,” said the bright youth. And a voice at Eddy’s other elbow said, “ And we’ve been arguing. I maintain that St. Paul would have to tramp it from Gaeta to Rome after they got ashore there. And most burning and bustin’ hot it is, as I well knows, having tramped it myself ;

and nothing to see when you get there. Not to be compared to the Broadway, or, for that matter, Sydney, or, if you strains a p'int, Rio, or, if you strains another p'int, Ratcliffe Highway. *I* never seen nothing at Rome equally to what you may see at Calcutta. *That's* the place. Why, old Jummagy Bummagy (Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy) hangs out a hundred times better than the old Pope. Blow *him*."

Eddy looked in his wonder to the bright lad, who understood him at once, and said,—

"Sailor, sir."

Eddy looked suddenly at the sailor—a man with close-cropped grey hair, and a red-brown face, with a rather obstinate expression; and as he did so he shut up his Bible, and the others shut up *their* Bibles. For, as the sailor said that night when he got into bed, they had been making uncommon bad weather of it.

"I want to ask you people a few questions," said Eddy. "I think you are better able to instruct me than I you. Will you tell me this—I hardly know where to begin, but this, if it is not impertinent—what have you got to live on?"

The heads went at once together to the centre of the class, listening. Some one—of course, it is nobody's business—had better look at those heads now and then, at a leisure moment. They are generally dirty, suggesting blue precipitate; yet there are eyes in them out of which the devil can look. The heads all drew together to hear what their spokesman, the bright young man, was to say to this pretty lad, with the £200 worth of jewellery on him. I doubt more than one in that class could appraise Eddy pretty accurately—at Fagin prices.

“Well, sir,” said the bright young man, “we ain't any of us got none on it at all. We are all in here off the tramp.”

“Have you been tramping?” asked Eddy, interested.

“Tramping round for work; yes, sir.”

“How very pleasant!” said Eddy. “Why on earth did you come here? Do you mean to say that you went on from one place to another, without caring where you slept, in this beautiful summer weather? I should like that immensely.”

“ You see, sir, that we had nothing.”

“ I always thought,” said Eddy, “ that you had barrows of cherries, or grindstones, or vans with brass knockers, when you went on the tramp. I always thought it looked so pleasant.”

“ We hadn't got no money,” said the sailor.

“ I have not got any, either,” said Eddy, wishing to awaken a fellow-feeling somehow, but feeling very much at sea. “ My eldest brother has taken away my money, because he was afraid I should make a fool of myself; and my brother is a very talented young man, with a singularly good judgment.”

The sailor, who was getting sleepy again, assented to this proposition more emphatically than good manners would warrant in other circles. He was decidedly of a mind with Roland.

One of the other Eutychians here suddenly became animated as though by a miracle, and said, in that hoarse Cockney voice which no one whom I have ever heard, except Mr. Mac-cabe, can imitate, “ If the young governor's brother were a near hand with the dibs, as his

were, Lord knows, yet the young governor might probably have such a thing as the price of a pint of beer about him, which he'd never miss," and was continuing his argument when the sailor awakened himself thoroughly, and said in a voice which, though hoarse like the Cockney's, was not slovenly as his was, but emphatic enough to be heard ten feet off in the wildest gale which ever blew round the Horn,—

“ Shut up ! ”

Eddy, a little frightened, looked at the bright young man, who raised his eyebrows and put up his finger. For the old sailor was going to speak; and it was evident to Eddy that this young man, for whom he was getting a stronger and stronger interest, put value on the old fellow's opinions.

“ Your brother was right in a-taking your money away from you. I can see as you've heaps on it, mor'n what most folks 'ud git through with. But you'll never have enough. You'll give it all away, as I give mine; or you'll lend it, or you'll drop it in the lee-scuppers in a gale of wind. Why, if you was paid

a hunderd and forty pound down, as I've known done, on the capstan-head in Hodson's Bay, for the run home, and that ship was drove into Rio, through one of these racing skippers racking every stick out of her, you'd knock every penny of it down in a week. Your brother must be an uncommon sensible young man for taking your money away from you the minute you come ashore. I should like to see him. I wish I had a brother as would have took *mine*."

"But, sir," said Eddy, puzzled and startled, turning over the leaves of the Bible, "if you haven't got any money, we might give you some of ours."

"What 'ud be the good, with two such as you and me? I've had heaps on it at times, well earned mostly; though I picked up a digger once in Francisco, which digger is on my conscience now I'm down in my luck: fourteen hundred dollars at Eucre in three sittings, and I slipping down right or left bower* on the ground, as the hand served: Lord forgive me! He won't try to pick up a British sailor again

* As intelligible to the British reader as it was to Eddy.

in a hurry," went on the old man, with a flash of the old Adam. "But the money done me no good, no more than yours will. I give the main of it away, and I knocked down the rest; and then I loafed round, because I wouldn't ship for fear of another rush, and I were very bad off, young sir, until Bill Taylor come."

The bright young man whispered, "Let him go on, sir; he knows heaps of things."

Eddy, with his Bible now wide open, and his eyes more open than his Bible, asked,—

"What did Mr. Taylor do for you, if you please?"

"He convinced me of sin," said the old sailor. "And I have never lost the conviction. I can't help going on a-doing on it at times; but then, don't you see, I'm convinced of it; and that's nigh half-way; for Bill Taylor* said so, and there was nobody ever like he."

At this point a loud voice from the platform said, with somewhat of a whine, Eddy thought, "My brethren, I will now address you on the fourth chapter of the Ephesians;" and at the

* Evidently the Great San Francisco Episcopal Methodist.

same moment he felt a touch upon his shoulder. It was Allan Gray.

“Arise, and let us go hence,” he said. And Eddy arose.

But the class arose also, and came round him, and pressed on him. And the bright young man, who was spokesman, said, “Come to us again;” and all their eyes brightened when they said after him, “Come to us again.”

And Eddy said, hurriedly, “I will try; I think that we might do one another good.” And to the young man he said, “Tell me your name, and come to me at Ashley’s Hotel to-morrow morning.” And the young man gave him his name; and his name was Joseph Holmes.

CHAPTER XIV.

ALLAN GRAY, taking Eddy, departed somewhat swiftly by a side-door, just as the expounder of the evening had laid down his argument, which was that the whole human race was naturally doomed to a fate utterly too horrible for description, or even contemplation; that the Deity had in all time and eternity known the fate of each individual; and that there were certain symptoms by which you might know whether or not the Deity had beforehand, apparently for no reason, condemned you to eternal fire or everlasting bliss. Allan Gray and Eddy had heard this much before Allan got Eddy away from his new friends.

When they were in the street, Allan Gray said, "Well, it is cooler here. That fellow would have it hot enough for us, if he had *his* way."

“But I thought you were the same way of thinking yourself,” said Eddy.

“Don’t begin that sort of thing, pray don’t,” said Allan, with extreme irritation. “What earthly business can it be to you what my religious opinions really are?”

“I am very sorry,” said Eddy; “I did not mean to make you angry; please don’t be angry; no one is ever angry with *me*, you know.”

Allan’s touch on Eddy’s shoulder quite reassured him. That little gentleman knew the look of an eye, and the touch of a hand, as well as most.

“My dear soul,” said Allan, “who could be angry *with* you? I am only angry *to* you? You are one of the very people expressly made to be angry *to*.”

“Well, be angry *to* me then,” said Eddy. “What is the matter? Are you cross with the fellow who was preaching, for instance?”

“Yes. God is not a vindictive fiend.”

“F—— was chassèd for saying the same things in the very same words,” said Eddy.

“Let them try it with me,” said Gray, in a

low snarling voice. Is Samson to sit for ever in the Temple of the Philistines? Let them provoke me to get my two arms round the pillars, and the house shall come down upon their heads, and on mine too. I tell you, young Evans, that God is not as they paint Him."

And Eddy said, "You went about searching for formulas, you know; and you have taken up with these. If they don't suit you, change them."

"Have you *no* faith left then?" said Allan.

"Yes; I think so. But ask me when I lie dying, and I'll tell you better about it."

"Sixty years hence," said Gray. "How is your aunt Eleanor?"

"Very bad," said Eddy, a boy again.

"What is the matter with her?" said Gray.

"The same that was the matter with the young lady in 'Pickwick'—want of taste. She don't like you."

"Does she dislike me very much?" asked Gray.

"Most specially and particularly," said Eddy. "Whatever your doubts on religious

subjects may be, you may make your mind easy about *that*."

"Don't be flippant," said Gray.

"I am not," said Eddy. "I am speaking to facts. My aunt hates you like poison."

"What does she say against me?"

"She says you are such an abominable prig. And so you are, you know."

Many do not understand English badinage. When it seems coarsest and most offensive, it frequently only proves that the men who are using it are the best friends in the world. This last remark of Eddy's made Allan Gray laugh, and put him in good humour.

This good humour was so obviously shown on the face of Allan Gray that Eddy shot his bolt, and then with his keen, kindly, steady little eye, watched to see whether or no it had hit.

"Come home with me to the hotel and see Roland."

"Oh dear, no!" was the reply.

"Well then, don't," was Eddy's not un-dextrous answer.

After walking a little time, Allan Gray said, "I hate meeting gentlemen."

“Which is the reason why you were sorry to see me. Go on.”

“But I am not sure, whether or no, it would not be better for me to meet your brother.”

“Why?” said Eddy.

“Well, I can’t exactly say.”

“Well then, come on, and don’t be an ass.”

“Mind,” said Allan Gray, “he is to be civil.”

“Was he ever anything else?” said Eddy.

“He will not have returned from the play-house,” said Allan Gray.

“He is thundering away at his logic by now,” said Eddy, “so come.”

And so the rivals met. Eddy, in writing to his Aunt Eleanor, pointed out to her that both on the father’s and on the mother’s side he had come of families famous—not to say notorious—for good manners. But he frankly confessed to his aunt that he had never seen any such politeness exhibited as was exhibited in the interview between Roland and Allan. “Allan’s manners,” he said, “were perfect (for there is nothing in the least degree Brummagem about Allan), but Roland beat him.”

Roland, the scholar and the athlete, had his square-sided, snake-like head bent over his books when the two came in. He was sitting in his shirt-sleeves, and he caught sight of his brother first, and Allan saw him drop his pen, and noticed that the two brown hands turned themselves with their palms uppermost, and spread themselves out to meet those of the brother. Allan, standing in the shade, saw this ; but saw more. He saw a bright light in Roland's face for one instant, which he knew, but which I have a difficulty in describing. The eyebrows were elevated and the mouth was slightly parted, and from between the parted lips the soul said : " My darling ! My darling ! where have you been ? "

Allan had looked into the soul of Roland for one instant. It was enough for him. Not now for one instant dreaming of the great question which was to arise between them, he remembered those words, and envied Roland nothing but his pretty little brother.

" And which, indeed," said Eddy, " I am not going to tell you where I have been. Here is Allan Gray come to see you."

The bright expression on Roland's face was changed at once. Allan Gray only saw before him a very tall, handsome young man, with a short, curling head of hair, who rose and greeted him with the smile of courtesy—a very different smile from that with which he had greeted his brother Eddy.

“I am sincerely pleased to make your acquaintance, Mr. Gray,” said Roland. “At one time I confess I was extremely jealous of the influence you had over my brother Edward. I am jealous no longer. I hear nothing but good of you. I think that you have done what I have not—conceived a line of life for yourself, and that you are following it out. I understand that you are given to good works.”

This was so frankly said, and evidently so frankly meant, that even that king of prigs, Robespierre, could not have resisted it. Allan Gray had no such intention.

“You receive me frankly, and like a true gentleman,” he said. “With regard to your jealousy of me, it is nothing; with regard to my having made a scheme of life, it is time I did so—you, so young, can wait; with regard

to my good works, some of us must turn to, or the house will be afire."

"You will sit down and be comfortable, now that you have come, won't you?" said Roland. "What are these good works of yours, and how can I assist at them?"

"The work at which I am *assisting*," said Allan, "is the old work of civilization. We are trying, through one form of Christianity, to civilize the people upon Saffron Hill. The way you can assist at it is by giving me money."

"That is easily done, and shall be done," said Roland.

"Thank you," said Allan; "send the money to me. What we, who are working, want is *money*. The Puseyites at the top of the Hill want it; the Papists are beating us by having more than we have. 'Money! money!' is our cry. I have not got any; send me some. What are you going to do with yourself? Soldier?"

There is an implied compliment, to most young men, in being accused of going into the army. We are a nation which is never at

peace. The gates of Janus are never open with our people. We are always spreading the English language somewhere. The great American army, recruited from 20,000,000, beat down an army recruited by 8,000,000. The English army, after a death-throe with Russia, crushed out a rebellious army backed by a population of 150,000,000. Therefore, Alphonse, Arminius, and Silas, don't you get villipending the British army. Is such a lad as Roland Evans to be thought a fool because he blushed scarlet when Allan Gray called him soldier? And, indeed, he looked like it. It was a compliment. We may have had our Walcheren, or indeed our Chillianwallah. But, my good Alphonse, brother of my heart! we have never had our Passage of the Beresina (we will give Eylau as a French victory). Arminius, my dear fellow, there was a battle of Jena once. Silas, my dear, did you ever hear of Bull Run? No! all young fellows of spirit have a pride in being thought British soldiers *in esse* or *in posse*, and Roland liked Allan Gray for his suggestion; for Roland had fought most of the battles of modern Europe, and

indeed some which have not been fought yet ; for example, the battle of Nieder Lahnstein, where you, being (do you see,) a Frenchman, turned your Prussian left, dash at the heights behind Ehrenbreitstein, take them, and have the whole of the Rhine Provinces at your feet, don't you see, with the command of the Rhine. Roland would have undertaken to do that little business for you to-morrow, just as willingly as he would have undertaken to bring about a coalition between the older Whigs and the Radicals, both doctrinaire and uneducated, for he was a boy of schemes. And this young man, Gray, was a young man of perception. Roland warmed to him, which was well for him.

“ I should *like* to be a soldier,” he said ; “ for I am strong, courageous, and clear-headed in danger ; but I fear I am condemned to Parliament.”

“ I wish *I* was,” said Allan, “ I would get some things done, I know, if I was.”

“ That's just it,” said Roland ; “ you wouldn't do anything of the kind. You can do *nothing* of the things you want to do. Where would

free-trade have been now, if it had not been for a combination of perfectly incalculable accidents? Peel for one accident; the Irish famine for another."

"You go too fast," said Gray. "Who told you that free-trade was a good thing, except in particular cases? I allow that free-trade in corn is good, as it feeds the people; but free-trade in other matters is murder to us in this over-populated country. When we get a nearly pure democracy, we shall have protection to native industry back again—hot and heavy. A pure democracy will never stand free-trade. When did they ever do so?"

"I don't remember," said Roland.

"I fancy not," said Gray. "Your American and your Canadian laugh it to scorn. There is such a queer *petitio principii* about it in the first term (correct me if I am wrong, for I have not been to Oxford and learnt boat-racing), which seems to me to condemn it. We practically find that we can compete (having a very rich and compact country) with every nation on earth on advantageous terms. Therefore, free-trade is as good for other nations as it is

for us. And so we send our dear Cobden to tell other nations what he entirely believes—that a franc is as good as a shilling. Some nations believe him; some don't. The Americans don't, and they are a trading people too."

"But you are attacking the very principle of free-trade," said Roland; "why, the very Tories have given it up."

"There spoke a Whig," said Allan Gray, laughing the while. "Won't think for himself; will only think for his party. What are you going to do when you get into Parliament?"

"Precious little, I suspect," said Roland, laughing also. "It takes half a dozen first-rate men, and accidents to back them, to get anything done. And I am not a first-rate man, and my accidents are inseparable, and become qualities. For instance, I have too much money."

"Give some of it to us then," said Allan Gray.

"I will. Depend on me; you and I shall be good friends in time. Now what would you

do, if *you* were in Parliament? How would you get matters done?"

"I should go on making myself a nuisance, like the importunate widow, until they *were* done; look at——. Look at him, and a fool too, all said and done."

These two rather splendid young men were drawing nearer and nearer to one another. They were not very unlike in character, though cycles apart in thought. Roland moved closer to Allan, and said, "What things would you have done, for instance?"

"Why," said Allan, "I would have the poor cared for better; and with regard to the public schools——"

He had, in reality, spoken some tolerably reasonable sentences about the public schools, but for dramatic purposes we will not repeat them. There was a violent objurgation outside the door, and then a violent crash against it. The Public Schools were upon him, to the utter puzzlement of poor Allan Gray. "Why were such fools brought into the world?" he asked himself at first. And then, when the rough prettiness of their horse-play had made

him laugh, he said, "What are they good for?" Let the boy Arbuthnot answer him that question, with the flag shaping itself on to his dead limbs! India is a great fact, my dear Allan Gray, even in these times of big things; and these boys helped to get it for you. And although the 180,000,000, can't accept Christianity, yet we have made them accept railways. Our boys are working your work, Allan Gray, and pretty near half of them have died in the service. Don't abuse the boys; they are not bad fellows when you know them.

For here they come in their fury—their quaint, petulant fury, which accounts for all kinds of battles; let us say from Agincourt to Magdala (popular, but incorrect). In comes Jimmy Mordaunt, blind with wrath, hotly full of his grievance; in comes Johnny Mordaunt, making as much noise as his brother. The old story—the elder brother has dexterously, in pretending to get change, grabbed all the younger one's money, and considers it as prize of war, refusing to give it up. The brothers Evans take violent sides in the dispute, and a row royal ensues.

It seemed so strange to Gray to see Roland taking part in such boys' play. It lasted some time ; doubtless, like Tom Pinch's organ, to the great delight of the gentleman down stairs, and the gentleman over-head ; and when it was over, Allan Gray was gone.

CHAPTER XV.

I THINK that Roland was secretly angry with the elder Mordaunt as to his good-humouredly bringing him to book about Mary Maynard. Miss Mordaunt was much too fine a young lady to have any mistakes made about her of any sort or kind. He would have been profoundly delighted that Roland should marry his sister, and would be very glad to see his friend happy with Mary Maynard. Only John Mordaunt, by far the *shrewdest* of the five boys, was determined that he should make up his mind.

Roland and Ethel had been brought up together, and had always called one another by their Christian names, and as Roland would have said, were as brother and sister. So would not Ethel have said. Ethel's secret was known to two people, and guessed by a third.

Miss Evans had seen it, and had tried rough excision, as we saw; that awful Mrs. Gray had guessed it, and had bullied Phyllis Myrtle to give her a philter, which would have only a temporary effect, and would go off, as she hoped, after they were married, causing neglect on Roland's part, and cause the red-handed, wild, rude Mordaunt clan, to become her daughter's avengers on the Evans family for what she had suffered at their hands. Such was the amiable old lady's scheme at one time, before she retired to London. *She* was gone.

One more, as you may remember, knew Ethel's secret, her brother Jim. Jim used, when a youngster—indeed, right up to the time of the bathing accident—to bully every one he could get to stand it, and, among others, of course, his sister. Both of them high-spirited, rough, and strong, they used to have terrible battles, for she would resist in defence of her property, and resist fiercely too, though he was too strong for her. His father had thrashed him for it, his brother thrashed him with a cricket-stump for it; but the boy only lay quite quiet and silent on the grass while the

blows descended, until Johnny, with a loud oath, threw the stump far and wide; and then the boy got up and let out his sister's fancy fowls into the farmyard—a horrid kind of revenge, which he could enjoy silently in her bitter disappointment at the shows. On the whole, I think that when she was about twelve years old she fairly and honestly hated her brother James.

That there is a natural brotherly love I know; that it may, under certain rare circumstances, be changed into a far other feeling, I have seen.

An actual cessation of hostilities took place, as a matter of course, when they were about fourteen, which was succeeded by indifference.

After Roland had saved Jim's life, there was, as the Doctor saw, a marked change in the latter. At home they were surprised at him. Though by no means less boisterous, his boisterousness had lost all its cruelty; and though he was far too close-mouthed to say anything to his sister, yet she noticed an alteration in him beginning—nay, it had scarcely begun when it was over. Before he had been

home a week, John was profoundly astonished at Jim bursting into the room where Ethel and he were, and saying, "I took your whip over to Shrewsbury, and waited while it was done; and I asked for the cheesecakes, and he had not got any of them," and bouncing out again. Still more, a week after, did his father and mother notice Jim and Ethel, with their heads together, walking rapidly and talking eagerly, going over the hill rabbit-shooting.

Of course, Jim talked a great deal now about Roland; and why should not she talk of what pleased him? This talk went on and on until it grew to badinage on the part of James, which she sometimes resented. There was no secret between them at all, only they never either of them spoke of Roland when others were present, save very slightly. And one day, James, in a mad mood, cut off a lock of Roland's hair, and sent it to his sister in a letter. She scolded him, but she kept it.

So the cloudless vacation went on—not one appearance of change. Nothing happened, save one, of the slightest importance, and that was only known to three people.

The Shrewsbury people must have a regatta, and Squire Evans and Squire Mordaunt being asked rather early for subscriptions, and being acted on by their boys, sent very large ones, arousing the wrath of their political opponents and the emulation of their neighbours. Sir Jeremy Hicks and Sir Topham Shiner topped them at once, and the committee found themselves with half as much money again as they wanted. There was only one thing to be done: make a greater thing of it—a four-oared race for £5 cups, and a pair-oared race for similar cups, open to all England.

Our young men had never thought of rowing, thinking there was nothing worthy of their skill, until the news of this came. It came first to the Evanses at breakfast, and Roland and Eddy were across the valley to the Mordaunts in ten minutes. *They* would row, of course, now it was no longer provincial: but old Maynard? Roland volunteered at once, before anything could be done, to ride across Longmynd to the Barton and see; and, in spite of Jim's prophecy, returned with Maynard to lunch, rather fat, but looking like rowing too.

Squire Charles Evans took the most intense interest in it. Devoted to every kind of sport, he had never seen any of this, now promising to be the most popular of all. He'd bear all the expense; he'd give them a handsome present all round if they won; he'd give a dinner to the tenantry: there was nothing he would not do. That evening Eddy was despatched to Oxford for a boat, with orders to see it home, and they discussed their plans.

These fellows had been carefully taught to row together for five years, and now had developed into four heavy men, perfectly accustomed to one another. They had rowed together often at the University also, but had only tried their strength in some college fours, which, of course, they won easily. They rowed thus: James, bow; John, second; Ox Maynard, third; and Roland, stroke. Eddy, coxswain (9st. 4lbs.) James Mordaunt, the lightest rower, 11st. 2lbs.

They found they went as well together as ever. After the first burst, they turned and looked at one another, and said, "That will do." The only question was, "Who was coming."

They never went near Shrewsbury. They found a piece of the Severn, lower down and nearer Stretton, which was even better than the course. To this place every day went the drag, the Squire driving, with the crew and divers occasional gatherings; once Sir Jasper Meredith, who sneered at the whole thing, generally Mildred, or a servant or two. Aunt Eleanor and Ethel used to ride over, and trot along the tow-path, and the young men rowed none the slower for that. Several times, while rowing about—for they spent most of the day there—Roland made Mildred get in and steer, and once, to her awe and delight, with her hair broken down and streaming like a flag, they took her raging all over the course at full speed. This was on a particular occasion when Eddy had to be elsewhere.

It was reported that two crews had come to Shrewsbury, and it was necessary that Eddy should go and look after them, and returned with a face blank with dismay. "This won't do, fellows," he said; "there's the London Rowing Club there."

“One of their scratch crews come pot-hunting,” said Jim.

Eddy mentioned four names which made Roland whistle loud and long—some of the best names in the club. It was even so. Four club-oars were going to retire into real life this season, and being four old friends, thought they would see the last of it handsomely; and so, going on from regatta to regatta, from Barnes upwards, now found themselves at Shrewsbury in an amused state of mind.

“I think we can manage the Manchester crew,” said the London coxswain, laughing.

“There’s a local crew of bumpkins training down the river,” said number two. “Do you know what they are like?”

“No! but I know their stroke’s name, ‘Evans,’—did you ever hear of him?”

“A youth to Henley and to fame unknown! Can’t say I do.”

“I’ll tell you, then,” said stroke. “Evans is the man who won his university sculls by beating Hexam easily, and Hexam is the

man who won the diamond sculls by beating you."

It was number two's turn to whistle now. "I wonder what sort of stuff he is sitting behind," he pondered.

"Pretty good, you may depend upon it," said stroke. "I wish we were fitter. Fancy getting picked up in a place like this! I shall emigrate if we are."

The Londoners easily beat the Manchester men; and soon after came down to join issue with their "dark" opponents, whose captain was the great sculler Evans, the young man who had beaten the last winner of the diamond sculls. They saw the Shropshire boat swinging up towards them, and they did not like it. Stroke said, between his teeth, to coxswain, "Picked up, by Jove!"

Our lads had not the least idea of winning against these well-known London names; and looked on them all, particularly stroke, as a countryman looks at Mr. Gladstone or Mr. Disraeli; for, not having been to Henley, they had never seen these mighty Londoners. And, indeed, they were worth looking at; set men,

of about three or four-and-twenty, bearded, brown, with brown ribbed arms—it looked, size excepted, like David against the Philistine.

Roland guessed pretty well what the London tactics would be, and he was right. When the word was given, the Londoner went away like a whirlwind, with the hope of getting far enough before them to *wash* them—that is to say, to keep the other boat riding uneasily in their wash, taking off one-third of their pace, and so win by sheer desperate rowing. Roland, on his part, was determined that this should not happen, and, with his experience, was away so quick after the Londoner that he never really cleared the Shropshire boat. For three quarters of a mile the struggle went on in this way, and then condition began to tell: Roland began to gain. Eddy did not see it at first; and when he did, he whispered the fact to Roland, who never changed his stroke. Aunt Eleanor, who was riding on the tow-path with her brother, gave a somewhat unfeminine shout when she saw her beloved Eddy's boat steadily passing that of the London coxswain. The

Squire, who rode with her, was in the wildest state of excitement.

A quarter of a mile from the post, the Shropshire boat had drawn fairly clear, and a little further the Londoners made one of those splendid efforts for which they are so famous; coming on with a rush, they completely headed the Shropshire boat, and the Squire's heart was in his mouth—he thought it was all over. But not so, Roland: crying out “Gloucester,” he, for the first time, quickened his stroke, which was well responded to, and after a furious struggle (the Londoners rowing magnificently to the last), pushed the boat in half a length ahead.*

Shrewsbury roared aloud in the fulness of its joy. Here was a boatful of their own lads, Evanses, Mordaunts, and Maynards, which had beaten in fair fight five of the pick of London's rowing chivalry. They might well roar, and indeed they did; and in the middle of their roaring, the Squire laid his hand upon his

* Those who saw the “Eton boys” win at Henley last year will see that there is no romance about this.

sister's arm, and said, "Follow me, Eleanor, quick."

There was a narrow lane up to the hotel, and they pushed their horses up it. The yard was deserted, save by an ostler or two. Sliding off his horse, and followed quickly by Aunt Eleanor, who thought he looked strange, he went into a little parlour, and having shut the door, fainted away on a sofa.

She rang the bell, and did what she could for him. When the man came, she said "Doctor! quick! Don't make a fool of yourself and tell any one. Doctor, I tell you."

Before the Doctor came he had got sensible again, but was a little stupid and wandering. Eleanor took occasion to ask the Doctor what it was, and was it the sun?

He said, "No, my dear Miss Evans. I had better trust you with the secret, but I would keep it from him: it is his *heart*."

So ended the Shrewsbury regatta, with these consequences, at least. The coachman drove the drag home, and the Squire thought he would sit inside, being tired; it was nothing. They rioted and shouted all the way home;

and Mildred, sitting between Jim and her lover, was inexpressibly happy, and Eddy outshone himself. Ethel Mordaunt rode with Aunt Eleanor, and cast many a look up at the party on the drag, as though she would be glad to be there herself. But the Squire sat alone inside, dull in the reaction after the morning's terrible excitement, and thinking of many things past; and Aunt Eleanor rode along, very dull too, and wondering whether she had done right in promising to keep his illness from his wife.

He got perfectly well the next day, and no one was the wiser. But on the 12th he made excuses: the day was hot, the birds were well-grown and wild, he would find them at luncheon at the Cairn and chance a shot there, but Roland must take his gun in the morning.

This refusal of his to shoot seemed very much to impress Squire Mordaunt. They had shot together on the 12th for so many years now, that he knew there was a reason. Very often during the day he looked very pensively and curiously at Roland, and seemed a little guilty when discovered. He talked often to

Roland, but in a constrained manner, as though leading up to a purpose, which Roland, who was as quick as lightning, saw in an instant.

What a singular delusion that is, talking *up* to an object, of *leading* the conversation towards your question! The feeblest intellect can detect the manœuvre, and the feebler the intellect the more cautious and reticent does it become, from the mere instinct of self-preservation. Again, used towards a tolerably good intellect, this mode of gaining an answer produces irritation of the highest kind; it is an insult to the understanding. But perhaps what the Americans call the "highest old sport," in the way of conversation, is to hear an inferior intellect using this dodge towards a higher one.

It was soon evident to Roland that Squire Mordaunt was trying to lead up to something, but he could not find out *what*.

"Well shot, boy," old Mordaunt would say. "Ah, you should shoot well; you come of shooting stock. I suppose in your time, when it comes, you will keep up the old head of grouse, hey?"

“ I don't like to anticipate that time, sir.”

“ Quite right ! quite right ! ”

Then again, “ We will take the south side of this glen, Roland. Knee-deep in fern, lad. Every acre would grow corn. Shall you, now, break any up ? ”

“ I am very well as I am, sir. I have never thought of such things.”

“ You should. Suppose you had a lawsuit over your father's will, now, with Eddy. And there's Mildred's fortune—very large, I can tell you ; and then there's your mother's jointure, very large. You won't be so very rich, I can tell you.”

“ I shall have enough for my wants,” said Roland ; “ and, to tell you the truth, Mr. Mordaunt, my father has been such a kind and gentle friend and companion to me, that I shan't care much about taking possession.”

“ Very meritorious. You are a good fellow, Roland ; I hope my boys are of the same opinion.”

Roland could not make out his object at all, and had to be yet more puzzled.

“ Bless me ! ” said Squire Mordaunt once

again during the afternoon; "what tearaway young fellows you are now-a-days. Why, there's young Redman: his mother has lost all her jointure in railway shares, and he has given her up the estate for life, and gone to Canada to make a fortune there."

"Happy fellow," said Roland. "I envy him. I'd a hundred times sooner have the making of a fortune than the spending of one."

Mr. Mordaunt pressed him no more, and meeting Squire Evans at lunch, they all talked and shot together, and Squire Mordaunt having dined with them, walked pensively home under the harvest-moon, and went straight to his study, and sat down in front of his escritoire with a candle.

"The boy," he mused, "will do well anywhere, if all goes against him. If all goes with him, however, he will be a poorish man. The defence of the Langley estate against the Bourden Langley claim took six years' rents. Whew! let us look at it again."

He took out a letter. Let us look at it:—

"SIR,—As a friend of the Evans family my-

self, I wish to inform you, as another friend of the family, of this very singular fact:—At the death of the present Mr. Charles Evans, the succession to the estates will be disputed.

“ I know nothing, and can advise nothing. I only know that they are not going to move during the life of the present Squire; and, moreover, that they have a great deal of confidence.

“ Yours,

“ NEMO.”

“ I don't like the look of it,” said old Mor-daunt. “ These people have money behind them and a good case, to judge from our friend Nemo's letter. I shall ride over to old Eleanor.”

CHAPTER XVI.

SEE broad and big Squire Mordaunt pensively riding, on a great brown horse, into the gate at Pulverbach, under the dark elms, past the fish-ponds, up to Aunt Eleanor's front door. See his own daughter running out in her riding-habit to greet him, and making him bend down from his saddle for a "regular good hug." A pleasant sight!

"Why, puss," said her father, "I missed you at breakfast."

"I rode over here. She is necessary to me at times. She does me good."

"Stick to her, my girl. There are few like her. Where is she?"

"Out in the yard;" and having given up his horse, he followed his daughter until they came to the gate of a splendid deep-littered

straw-yard, of great extent, hemmed in on all sides by various buildings, and on one side by a vast barn, as big as some cathedrals, from the open doors of which came a pleasant sound of thrashing.

Advancing slowly across the centre of the litter, in a short gown, with her back well in, and her head well up, a basket on her arm, came Miss Evans: heading a wedge-shaped procession. In front of her skimmed and hopped innumerable pigeons, about her feet and immediately behind her were the fowls—the hens “pawking” and gandering, the little ones losing their mothers in the crowd, and peeping shrilly when trodden on by the bigger ones; the cocks solemn and gallant. Then about forty little black Fisher Hobbes’ pigs, shrieking wildly, and changing places until they looked like four hundred; then a dozen porkers, two calves, and four hrumpling old sows bringing up the rear. With this following, she approached the gate, and saluted Mordaunt—

“Well, George, and so you have found your way here once more?”

“ I should come here more, if you did not scold me so.”

“ That’s nonsense. I only scold you when you provoke me. How are you, old friend ?”

And so, pleasantly chatting, these three went the tour of the farmyard, looking at all its wonderful order, thrift and abundance. In the “ woman’s kingdom,” which some say is coming, I, projecting my soul into the future, prophecy that a very great number of “ disen- thralled” women will become *farmers*, and, moreover, the very best of farmers. Even as they are now, with such education as they are allowed to scrape together, a vast number of women have every qualification which goes to make up a good farmer. Thrift, diligence, and attention to details are three qualifications which few, even now, will deny to the majority of women, and those three qualifications are one half the battle. Let them be instructed in the science of the matter, and that is not such a very difficult thing, and the instinct of order and management, so much higher in ordinary women than in ordinary men, will do the rest. Why are we always wanting (by advertisement)

a "Lady Superintendent" for some institution or another? Why cannot a "limited hotel" get on without a "Lady Manager?" Look at the duties of a great nobleman's housekeeper; and then tell me that a well-trained, clear-headed woman would not make a better farmer than one half of the ill-educated, narrow-minded men who have got the land. Why, one of the best-managed farms, some 14,000 acres—mind you, in Victoria—was kept by two old maiden ladies: and for that matter, Eleanor Evans is no ideal personage.

"I wish I could make my farm pay like this," said Squire Mordaunt, pensively. "I lost a thousand pounds the last two years. If it was not for my wife keeping things so well in hand in the housekeeping, I should be pinched to keep the boys at the university."

"Why don't you give the farm up to her, then?" asked Eleanor; "then you might go on with your fox-hunting, and your game preserving, and your politics, and your magistrate's work, with an easy mind. A farm takes a man's or woman's whole time and energy, and here you put ten irons in the fire, leaving the

poor farm to the last, and then come crying to me because you lose money over it. Come in."

They went into Eleanor's long, dark room, and she put down her hat and her egg-basket, and taking a particular pencil from a particular place on her desk, began writing a date on each of the eggs, as she handed them to her aide-de-camp, Ethel, who meanwhile had opened a long drawer—one of a dozen in an old oak press; the drawers were half filled with oats, and in these oats Ethel carefully placed every egg, in the succession in which it was handed to her.

"There," Eleanor said, when it was done; "I suppose you are too fine a gentleman to do *that?*"

Mordaunt confessed it.

"I thought as much," said Eleanor, triumphantly; "and you talk of farming! Why, by this simple detail, and by never trusting the eggs into my servants' hands, I average ten chicks out of every sitting of thirteen; and, in spite of your bothering foxes, which I, not having had my warnings attended to, mean

most persistently to trap, I made £97 last year out of my fowls alone, clear profit. What does your pork which you eat cost you?"

"I never made any exact calculation," said Squire Mordaunt, drily. "I got up to 8s. a pound once, and then I dropped it. I want to speak to you."

"Then, Ethel, my love, go and get the garden report together for me, as your father is going to waste my time. (Ethel went out.) I am sick and tired of you men. I don't know what you were brought into the world for. And then, if things go wrong, it is always *us*. Now, what is the matter?"

"You did not always think so of men, dear Eleanor," said Squire Mordaunt.

"And don't now, my dear George. Ah, it is a long while since *that*. Where is your brother?"

"In India still."

"Ah, well! George, remember that no one but you and I know that only tender passage in my life. Keep my secret."

"It is not much of a one, Eleanor. He made you think that he loved you when he did

not. And you talk of it being the only tender passage in your life! Why, your life is a piece of music made up of tender passages. But here, I am uneasy, and I have come to you as having the clearest head in your family. Read this," and he put before her the anonymous letter.

She read it twice very carefully, and then she folded it up, and said: "This is very serious and very annoying, indeed."

"Have you any idea what it means?"

"Oh, yes! I know well enough what it means. It means twenty thousand pounds worth of law, and very likely a sequestration of the estate *pendente lite*. You were called to the bar once—that is good law language, is it not?"

"I have forgotten my law," said Mordant, "but that don't seem to ring true somehow. However, I understand what you mean, which I probably should not if you stated it correctly. What is it all about?"

"Oh, it is the old Cecil Evans's claim on the estate, dormant now for forty years. It was last made when our father came into the

estate. His father died without a will, and our father inherited; and then up gets one Cecil Evans and claims to inherit as eldest legitimate son. He abandoned his suit after a short time, publishing everywhere that it was only from want of funds. Indeed, I remember to have heard it said that many thought him ill-used. He went to Australia, where they have made mints of money, and are now far richer than we are; and now they are going to spend some of it in trying to turn us out."

"Have they a good claim?"

"Good enough to cost a deal of money. But it was always said that we had papers which would checkmate them. Old Some, our solicitor, is alive still. Let us communicate with him; he knows all about it."

"Shall we tell Charles?"

"*Certainly not*, unless they move before his death. I have my reasons for not telling Charles."

"They should be good ones."

"They *are* good ones. I tell you it would kill him in a week," said Eleanor.

"Has he been ill?"

“Yes! Between ourselves, he had a very dangerous attack the day of that silly regatta. Let us go to old Somes.”

“Well, we will agree to it,” said Mordaunt. “What was the name of the man who—you know what I mean—before my brother?”

“Georgy Rolston,” said Aunt Eleanor, frankly. “I wonder what has become of *him*, for instance.”

“He is Dean of St. Paul’s,” said Mordaunt; “the very man who is looking after our boys.”

CHAPTER XVII.

ALL things must end, even a long vacation ; and the yellowing leaves began to tell of separation. But what are changes under such circumstances as we find here, with youth, health, and wealth ? only changes from one form of pleasure to another. The mothers and the sisters, saddened at the parting, listened to the young men's talk ; it consisted only in anticipations of pleasures even greater than those of home. They were glad enough to get away, as they had been glad enough to come.

With regard to young James Mordaunt, however, it was very difficult to see whether he was glad or sorry at the change. He spoke with intense pleasure of his return to the University, and of the various things they would do, yet he was distraught, melancholy, and by no means himself : and no explanation could be offered

of the change in him, except that he had fallen in love with somebody.

Since Roland had been spoken to on these matters by the downright Mordaunt, his conduct had been most discreet; he had never flirted with Mary Maynard—when any one was by; and as for Ethel Mordaunt, he had treated her like his sister, only with more profound consideration.

They had all left their college in early summer, full of anticipations of home; and now they returned to the college, full of anticipations of an agreeable change from the perpetual sunshine weather of home; and the change after all was a failure to them. The great, first attraction of one of the old English Universities, is the entire and perfect freedom from restraint during the time when the youth is as much a schoolboy as ever. On the return after the first long vacation, this is almost always gone, and the individuality of the man begins to show. The man is not merely a cricketing, or boating, or tart-eating schoolboy; not merely the gregarious creature of whom you can scarcely find five separate types in a

school of five hundred; he begins to show what individuality there is in him; begins, when thrown on himself, to show what he is likely to be in the future.

The most empty and frivolous of lads; the lad who has spent his first year in doing all that he has been forbidden to do, drinking and smoking more than is good for him, ordering things which he does not want, but which must be paid for, finds out this; for no human soul was ever satisfied with new waistcoats and fresh jewellery for long. He gathers these choice flowers still, but the bloom and scent are gone, and he merely goes on doing it because he has begun; and becomes, in his third year, if he lasts as long, a miserable and unhappy spectacle, entering on the ministry of a church which requires a clear head and a bold heart for her service, a *blasé*, heedless man, often deeply in debt, sighing regretfully, up to the latest moment before that Trinity Sunday which is to alter his life for ever, for the fleshpots of Egypt. With him we have little to do; these lads of ours had little in common with him, yet they

felt that the University was not as it had been.

There was certainly some little pleasure at meeting such few friends as they had ; but this did not last long. The river, which they all loved, was not the same, with its broken reeds and muddy banks, as it was in bright June. They took their four down, and rowed as splendidly as ever ; but it was in a perfunctory way, and Roland was a little cross at the observation which they attracted, and demanded of Eddy the innocent, whether they could not go down the river like others without being watched. The four-oared races were rowed that term, which made Roland the more petulant ; and the first day, seeing certain men prepared to run up with them, he rowed like fury over three-quarters of the course, and then eased, turned, and rowed down again, giving these gentlemen their run for their trouble. The University was a failure as far as boating went. “ What rot it is ! ” he said in the barge. “ I could find four watermen here on the shore, who could give us a hundred yards, and row round us.”

“You are beginning to find *that* out,” said Sir Jasper Meredith, laughing at him. “Didn’t I always tell you so. You are a fine fellow, Roland; but you have neither the pluck nor the dexterity to sweep a chimney.”

“I’ll bet your life I’ll sweep any chimney in the University I can get into,” replied Roland, in a loud voice.

“Leave him alone, Meredith,” said old Mordaunt, “or he’ll do it. He has got out of bed the wrong side, and will make a fool of himself in any way you will name, if you will only defy him.”

“True, O king,” said Roland, laughing, in good humour. “Well, what shall we do till hall?”

Jimmy Mordaunt, in a stolid sententious manner, looking nowhere, with his head in the air, suggested that they should go up street together, have ices, and look at trouser-patterns for Sunday morning. “We used to like it well enough four months ago,” he said; “of course we should like it now.”

Sir Jasper Meredith laughed, winked, and said, “He has read you the lesson, that young

bull. Take hold of me, will you, and carry me somewhere out of this. Are you going to take me over the plank, old Mordaunt? Well, old Mordaunt, and what do you say to it all?"

Old Mordaunt was far too wise to say anything. He grinned, however, as he deposited Meredith with his servant. Nothing more.

There was a ghost of a revival of the old days among them that night. They were quietly together in the Evans' rooms, when it occurred to James Mordaunt to take strong objections to Eddy Evans' recent conduct, on many grounds. There was no new specific charge at once, but a number; and James put it that he was getting objectionable in many ways. That he was steering badly, talked loudly in the street, ate too much and too fast, slopped his drink about at dinner, talked while he was chewing, and scraped his plate with his knife. This, of course, as was usual, ended in denials and recriminations, in which Eddy used language towards James which of course ended in a fight, or to speak more truly, in a blind, aimless, innocent romp between the two

lads. Unluckily, however, even the old fun fell worse than dead, for Eddy, having laughed all the wind out of him, as he afterwards explained, fell rather heavily under James Mordaunt, and made his head bleed. They did not fall so light as in the old times. Poor Edward would have cried if he had been still a boy; but it was their last romp together.

Old Mordaunt had started a pipe, the first of the set who did so, and puffing it, he said, "You two must give up skylarking. You are getting too old and too strong. All that has passed away. Eh, Roland?"

They put down their names for the Greek prose lecture, because the Dean still had it, but only for his sake. The Dean's eyes brightened when they came in, and they brightened up also when they saw their good friend.

But it was all as dead as ditch-water. Maynard, the ox-like, who never said anything, but went his ways through the world without exciting himself (saving when he quickened his perfectly rowed oar to the motion of Roland's back), now was the brightest of them all.

Their old world had become dead to them. Before him a new, bright, and most beautiful world was about to open. The Dean knew why, and was not surprised; but he was surprised that this good, handsome, not over clever lad should shine so brightly beside the four others, so much brighter and cleverer than he. "The mere fact of a lad's going to be married next Christmas," said the Dean to himself, "need not make all *that* difference. There is something wrong in these Gloucester boys."

Maynard had never been a great favourite of the Dean's. He had thought him lumpish and rather stupid, though his scholarship was high for that college. The Dean had very little society in his college, being by far the best man there, and the tattle of the common-room was distasteful to him. Consequently he spent far too much of his time in his own rooms among his books.

But books will not last a man always. The eye gets physically wearied of print in time, and when that happens, a man should have society among his own equals. In his own

college the Dean had none. His old friends were dropping one by one from the University, and the few who were left were changed in many ways, and the Dean was a lonely man. So it came about that in the dull, long nights, when the college was asleep, he had got into an unfortunate habit of summing up his own case against destiny. A most unhealthy habit indeed.

Here was his case against destiny. He was the son of a poor clergyman, but a splendid scholar. His father had carried everything before him in the way of University honours, and had then thrown everything—his fellowship, his chances of promotion—in every way to the dogs, by marrying a young lady to whom he was promised, and by declining on a small curacy, where his scholarship was a mere incumbrance. He had then got a small living, and had just lived long enough to get his boy (the Dean) nominated to a good public foundation. After which he died, leaving his wife with £100 a year of her own, and £1,500 on a life insurance policy.

This £1,500 was devoted to the Dean's

education: money seldom went further. At school the boy carried everything before him, spending as little as possible, and spending nothing without consultation with his mother. "I must be a great man," he said to her. "I have abilities for it; and I must show among boys and men as a gentleman, and not as a *scrub*. If you will trust me, mother, I will invest this money at cent. per cent." And she trusted him; and was he not now enjoying an income of £700 a year from a capital of £1,500? He did all he had ever said he would do, and his mother lived in wealth, happiness, and pride; talking of her son, the Dean, among the gossips, as though he were Dean of Durham, and waiting calmly for the time, now soon to come, when he would be head of his house, and Vice-Chancellor, walking, in scarlet cloth and velvet, among princes, warriors, scholars of all nations, with six silver maces before him, conferring honours upon them all. Good lady! her heart swelled with an unutterable pride, as she in her imagination rehearsed her behaviour as mother of the Vice-Chancellor, when all the sages from the east

and from the west, from Berlin to Harvard, should be taking their honours from the hands of her son.

Could he destroy it all by telling her that he was a miserable and disappointed man; that he had missed his aim in life; that the world she thought so great was so unutterably small to him; that his deanery of the college was merely in his eyes the situation of an over-paid bear-leader; that the position of proctor, in which she had rejoiced so much, was an office utterly loathsome and degrading to him, which he had fulfilled so ill and so unwillingly, that he was cheered to the echo by all the worst of the undergraduates at the end of his term; and that his name was even now remembered as that of the "good proctor"? Could he tell her that there were times now when he recalled what he had meant to be, which made him say to himself in his bitterness that he would as soon be carried through the streets as Guy Fawkes, as walk through them as Vice-Chancellor? No; he could not tell all this to her, or to anyone; though as the evening which followed the first day of the term closed in,

these thoughts came crowding on him as thick as ever—nay, thicker. He would not face the long night alone. He rang his bell, and sent his servant to request Mr. Maynard to sup with him at nine o'clock.

Then he set all his doors open, and walked up and down through all his rooms, from one end to the other, still putting his case against the world. How came it that he was tied here by the leg, an inevitable head of a house, an equally inevitable Vice-Chancellor in his turn, while the great world, in which he could have shone, went spinning on and leaving him and his ideas behind? Could he have escaped, the very name of his college would have been a drag and a shame to him in those days. And his holy orders, forced on him by the rules of his house—there was a bar. His head grew hot as he thought of that, as it always did; for the Dean had opinions which he kept to himself, but which even the breadth of the National Church could scarcely hold. And he was an honest man. If he had ten thousand a year to-morrow, *Parliament* was closed to him. He put that thought under his feet, and stamped on it.

“Get,” said a very pleasant voice, “a bishopric. With your political power, not so very difficult.” And he said to himself, “That was very neatly put, my dear friend in black. Fancy if it was to come to *that!*” And as he said it, he grew pale and trembled. And then he went into his innermost chamber and knelt before a chair; but he had scarcely knelt a minute before he cast the chair from him, and began his walk again, singing what he was apt to sing a little too often when his scepticism was strongest, and his consequent cynicism greatest—

“There was turning of keys and creaking of locks,
 And he took forth a bait from the iron box.
 Many the cunning sportsman tried,
 Many he flung with a frown aside,
 Jewels of lustre, robes of price,
 Tomes of heresy, loaded dice.
 At length was a perfume of sulphur and nitre,
 As he came, at last, to a Bishop’s Mitre.”

“Well, it has not come to that yet. Let me forget! If I had only had ten thousand pounds, and if she had not been a fool,—God bless her!—it might have been different. Let us prepare for this young bridegroom.”

A bitter, cynical tongue had the good Dean,

well known in lecture, in common-room, and in senate-house : a man who had made many enemies by his stinging, quiet sarcasm. Some of those enemies would have given money to have seen him now, forty-five years of age, and in a wig, gathering flowers out of his little terrace-garden by candle-light, and bringing them in, and laying them on the table, sorting them out and putting them in a vase. Poor old Dean !

His next act was much more Don-like, and less sentimental. He took his bunch of keys from his pocket, and unlocked his escritoire, and from a second place in it took another key. And even while holding that key in his hand, he did another strange thing, not to be believed by senate-house or hebdomadal board. Pulling aside a pile of neatly docketed papers,—which were, indeed, so many lamentable efforts of Greek prose, all to be waded wearily through in the course of the week,—he took out an old bundle of letters tied together, in the tie of which was stuck an old rose. Going to the table, he took the best fresh geranium he could find, and put it in beside the rose,

and laying down the letters beside the Greek exercises, scratched his head in deep thought, and in doing so scratched his wig off.

It fell impartially, like the rain, on the Greek exercises, the letters, the rose and geranium, and looked up at him, as only a wig *can* look. With an air of vivacious effrontery, as though it would say, "You and I are fine fellows; but must pull together; we are nothing apart." The Dean scratched his bare head, and said, with a sigh, "Ah! it is too late for all that now."

The sudden entry of his servant caused him to lock up his escritoire very rapidly, and to lock his wig inside, with his love-letters and the other witnesses of his folly. Turning to scold his servant, he caught sight of himself in the glass, and scolded not. He undid the escritoire, and taking out his wig, put it on in the presence of his servant, and going with his key to his most sacred wine-bin, took out a very particular bottle of wine, saying to himself, "This will unloose his tongue, at all events."

In came supper—a most delicate, light little

supper, for the good Dean had learnt in his seclusion to know the pleasures of good eating, and had, indeed, sent two of the young men in the kitchen, at various times and at his own expense, to his London club for instruction. In came Maynard, beautifully dressed, looking splendid, with a geranium in his button-hole. The servant was sent away, the oak sported, and Maynard, the simple, was left undefended, to be pumped by this wily old Dean.

“You won’t find any beer here, Maynard,” said the Dean. “These vivers are too good to be washed down by that infernal compound of malt, hops, and raw beef, which is good for nothing but to irritate the temper, and the consumption of which accounts for so much of our national history. You will find a bottle of White Hermitage beside you: don’t be afraid of it. I have my half-pint of Beaune, as you see. A young stomach like yours should be able to stand hashed venison (not Magdalen, my dear youth, but Arundel) and Hermitage.”

Maynard made some respectful reply, and they supped like gods; and when thoroughly

refreshed, moved to the fire, with their wine between them.

“And so,” said the Dean, “you are to marry Miss Evans, at Christmas.”

Maynard’s sober tongue was thoroughly loosened by drinking White Hermitage as though it were beer, and he thought the Dean an uncommonly friendly, gentlemanly fellow, and very handsome too.

He replied, without the least sheepishness, that such was the case, and received the Dean’s congratulations with respectful dignity.

“If you will allow me, we will drink to the bride-elect,” said the Dean. And down the throat of the innocent Maynard went another quarter of a pint of the White Hermitage.

“A handsome family,” said the Dean. “At least, judging from Roland, I should say so. Eddy is ugly, certainly; but one might almost predicate of him that his inseparable accident would be pretty sisters.”

“You think Eddy ugly, sir?”

“Decidedly, I should say. A weak, silly, frivolous little being, but very amiable.”

“I assure you, sir,” said Maynard of the

loosened tongue, "that you are quite mistaken. Eddy has quite as much go in him as Roland."

The Dean laughed, and put the question by. "The Evanses are very rich, are they not? You get wealth as well as beauty and wit by this match, I hear."

"No," said Maynard. "I have a large property. She only has five thousand at present."

"Indeed! By-the-by, did I dream it, or is there not some of the Evans' property alienated?"

"Not that I am aware of," said Maynard. "I settle two farms on her for pin-money. In case of my death, she has everything, barring my mother's jointure and my sister Mary's little fortune. There never has been any question of money. Why should there?"

"Of course not," said the Dean. "I am clumsy in my inquiries. I wanted to know whether there was not some of the Stretton property alienated—on Miss Evans, I mean."

"Aunt Eleanor!" said Maynard.

"Exactly," said the Dean, settling himself.

“The very person. Fill your glass, and tell me all about her. I knew something about these Evanses in old, old times, and I remember this Miss Evans. She has taken to woman’s rights, farms her own land, goes shooting, and goes to market, does she not? She was pretty at one time—what is she like now?”

“Aunt Eleanor,” said Maynard, solemnly, “is one of the most beautiful women you ever saw in your life, sir; and if there is an angel on earth, it is she.”

“Pity she did not marry,” said the Dean, whistling.

“There never walked a man in shoes good enough for her, sir; and that is why she did not marry. As for her estates, which she certainly farms, they would be defined by Mr. Hallam as an appanage in her mother’s right, in no way influencing the succession, or in any way at the mercy of the main hereditary branch. They are at her own disposal.”

“Hang Mr. Hallam!” said the Dean, fearing that Maynard had drunk so much Hermitage that he would get sententious instead

of communicative. "Why did she not marry?"

"You must ask my mother that story, sir," said Maynard.

"Come, you know it;" said the Dean, "and you may as well tell it. Do you ever smoke a cigar?"

There was no hesitation in Maynard's confidence after this.

"Miss Evans," he said, "had once a proposal from a man whom she greatly esteemed, and to whom, my mother says, she had shown the most marked partiality. To the great astonishment of her most intimate friends, she refused him so emphatically that he retired, and was seen in that part of the country no more."

"Aye, indeed!" said the Dean, "a poor-spirited fellow. Well, and did she ever give any reasons for her unreasonable conduct?"

"They became apparent to a few; although she esteemed the first man, there was one she esteemed more; in fact, she refused the first man in favour of another."

"And is yet unmarried!"

“Yes; the man was a soldier, and had shown her great attention; but the one word was never spoken by him, and he went away and married another. It was disappointment and a feeling of humiliation in having given away her heart and not having it accepted, which prevented her from ever marrying.”

“Still handsome,” said the Dean, thoughtfully.

“Still beautiful,” said Maynard; and took his leave.

The Dean, sitting before the fire, said, “She had better have had me before I had to wear a wig; but it is too late now.” And there was no one to care what the Dean said, so he took off his wig and went to bed.

Nothing is easier than to go to bed; but few things, at times, are more difficult than going to sleep. The Dean found that out. As soon as he was in the dark he began thinking. If I were to write down all that he thought about, you would certainly not read it. I can only give you the results.

“Eleanor still handsome, and I a bald old man in a wig: though I am only her age,

when all is said and done. I have a good mind to go down and see her ; but, perhaps, I had better send my wig, to let her see how things stand. She has taken to all kind of things, why the dickens hasn't she taken to socialism ? Then she might turn her estates into a Phalanstery, and I would join her with my money, get her to marry me, and burst it all up triumphantly. After such nonsense as that, I know I must be going to sleep."

But he was not. After a full hour he was broad awake enough to say, "What did I ever do to K—— that he should have sent these outrageous young Bedlamites to *me*, and so arouse my interest in her again ? There will be mischief among those boys. K—— licked them into shape ; he would lick any *boy* into shape I ever saw. But boys have an ugly trick of growing into men ; as they are. And one single pretty woman would play the deuce among the lot of them."

Finding that this consideration did not make him more sleepy, the good Dean arose, and putting on his wig and some clothes, buckled to at the Greek prose exercises : which had the

desired effect. For he fell asleep over them, and nearly burnt down the college, but only in reality burnt his wig.

As he had not got a lock of hair on his head to send as a specimen of colour, the leading barber of that town sent him the closest match he could : a bright red wig, made for a gentleman commoner of scrofulous tendency, of St. Vitus' College, who had had his head shaved for *delirium tremens* ; the only wig without grey let into it which the barber had in stock. The Dean took it and wore it, to the delight of the undergraduates ; for a red wig was better than a grey one.

“ If my confounded hair had stayed on my head,” he thought, “ things would have been different. I am only her age.” And so he made himself ridiculous by wearing the red wig. If any one else had done it, he would have murdered them with sarcasm. But no man knows what an ass [he is when he is in love.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A VERY long foreseen confusion now occurs in this story. If the kind reader has been patient enough to notice the fact, he will perceive that not one of the people whom I have tried to present to him in an amiable light had been doing anything at all. The energetic Gray, the most active among our characters, hitherto had been only vegetating. There had come no question between him and the world. Aunt Eleanor's chief glory was in her plan of sowing white rock stubble turnips, and arguing with Mr. Martin Sutton, of Reading. As for the boys, they had been doing rather less than nothing. Sir Jasper Meredith having now attained his majority, had built some cottages, but finding a return of scarcely one per cent., had gone off into doctrinaire radicalism, and had screeched his commonplaces of supply and demand into the ear

of a sympathizing vestry, who said that they always knew that no Meredith was the man to raise the rates on them. But none of them had done anything.

The whole lot of them would have slept through life, and awakened wondering in eternity, had it not been for a *bouleversement* in affairs, which brought out the character of all.

We must follow our boys first. In spite of the cynical croaking of Sir Jasper Meredith, these boys held together, with Roland as their captain. In those old times men could row and read at the same time. Witness an Oxford eight at Putney, in 1852, with two first-class men in her. Now we have changed all that; it matters not, I am only speaking of the past. In the four-oared races of the October term, Brasenose, with the splendid fury which seems to be a *specialité* of that college, rowed down every crew in succession, until they were thrown, in the last terrible heat, against St. Paul's, manned by our five boys. Brasenose, with the Berkshire shore, raged away ahead, in the style which few men can ap-

proach. But when the Gut was passed, the steady steam-engine style of the Gloucester boys began to tell. Eddy Evans, sitting like a little Memnon in the stern, merely nodded to his brother to quicken the stroke. Roland did so, and was answered by the crew as one man. The magnificent rage of Brasenose was as nothing. Opposite the Cherwell, Eddy tickled his boat over in front of them, and washed them, and there was an end of the old *régime*; no more University boating for them. One or two of them, in after times, and in subdued voices, disputed whether they had got more harm than good out of it. At all events, there was an end and finish of it.

Three days afterwards the Moderation lot were out, and Roland and the elder Mordaunt figured in the first class.

The very next Thursday, at the Union, Lord Eustace Vanderbilt made his great Radical speech, in which he demonstrated, to the satisfaction of the majority, that Christianity and democracy were identical; that the only true formulas of Christianity were to be found in the traditions of the Church; and that, there-

fore, the only true democracy would be found in the formulas of the High Church party. Lord Eustace was clever, and had a vast deal to say for his theory ; as well as any one else has who takes it up. But the instant he sat down, Roland was up and at his throat. Old Mordaunt, who was sitting beside him, growled out to him, from time to time, " to draw it mild," but Roland scorned him.

" Priestcraft and democracy!" he cried. " Who is he that publishes the banns of that adulterous marriage? Who is this man who sits there with brazen forehead, and talks this blasphemy? The great grandson of the favourite of William the Third, who would have struck his degraded successor to the earth if he had heard his atrocious sentiments. (Order, order.) It was well to cry order; it was a most excellent and admirable thing to cry order, when an honest English country gentleman denounced a renegade Dutchman, pampered as his family had been, and rewarded as his family had been, for turning to and talking mere Sacheverellism, or worse." Roland also was at a loss to conceive what this

young nobleman expected to gain by it, and took about half an hour in trying to find out: during which he tore the Constitution to tatters; gave his opinion of the Church pretty strongly; and called the house to witness the state of things we had been brought to: which, with a rapidly civilizing population of nearly two hundred millions, the possession of the principal naval keys of all seas, and a surplus of three millions, was scarcely an easy matter.

Then finding, like most young speakers, that he was wide of his subject, he harked back to it as well as he could. "What did the noble lord want? what did the noble lord mean? If the noble lord meant that the only form of pure democracy was Christianity directed by priests, he would fight that noble lord to the last drop of his blood. If, on the other hand, the noble lord meant merely that pure primitive Christianity meant pure democracy, he would take the noble lord to his bosom." Then he rambled on, missing his central point oftener than he hit it, and ended by doing what all inexperienced speakers do, twaddling off into a thin end of nothing at all. One of

the greatest and most important accomplishments required for public speaking, is to know when to leave off. To speak for an hour on a proposition, to keep your audience interested all the time, and then to round up your speech with your original proposition, claiming to have proved it, is not an easy thing. The only recipe for doing so which I know of, is to believe in your proposition, and speak the truth.

Old Mordaunt then rose, and deprecated personalities; denounced the habit of reducing an argument from the general to the particular; and committed himself to the statement that there were few men in the world whose hearts were more entirely in accord, on the whole, than those of his friend Roland Evans and the noble lord opposite. "He did not happen himself," he said, "to agree with either of the honourable members, because he happened to be a Tory. He was very sorry for it; but Tory he was. Lord Eustace Vanderbilt would observe that his family had been Tories centuries before any Dutchman had heard the word Whig. He supposed it was bred in the bone, and would

come out in the flesh. Still he had the highest honour for his friend Roland Evans, and for his family. Had it not been for the Evans family, he (Mordaunt), could never have appeared there. At the time when the noble lord's (Vanderbilt's) family were cowering like whipped hounds under the lash of the Spaniard, his (Mordaunt's) family had been busy at every kind of Popish sedition ; in which he gloried. The Evans family, having persistently taken the winning side, that of Protestantism, had always brought the Mordaunt family through, and he would stick to them now. He stuck to his friend Roland, by saying that his language was indecent and indiscreet, even towards a mere mushroom Dutch interloper, and that he could not have meant what he said." After which, he sat down suddenly, and preserved an ox-like silence.

Such an astounding breach of all possible good manners paralysed the assembly. As for old Mordaunt, he had done what he wanted—roused Roland, and he sat quite still. "I want to see how he will get out of a scrape," he said to the little wizened form of a man who

nestled beside him. "He insulted the man, and I have driven the insult home."

Lord Eustace Vanderbilt and Roland were on their legs at the same time; both white with wrath. The President hammered for order, and they obeyed him; before either had spoken, a thin, cracked little voice, piercing shrill, was heard, and the Union, turning towards it, saw that it proceeded from Sir Jasper Meredith.

"Sir," he cried, "I rise—if such an unhappy and miserably formed eidolon as I, can be said to rise—to order. Sir, it would be foolish in you to deny the fact, that two of our best men have quarrelled personally, and have interchanged insults. I beg you to give me time for speech, sir—I beg you and the assembly to forgive any want of consecutiveness in my argument; for if you, Mr. Fitzgerald, were the shattered wreck which I am, your sentences would not run so smooth, and your logic would not be so perfect. I cry for your pardon, sir, and I cry for theirs. Please listen to me, you two: though I shake and tremble with fear at speaking in public. You two mean the same

thing; why quarrel over details and personalities? I beg you to make friends. The hot words which you have said to one another will fester to all eternity, if you do not recall them. Forget and forgive, you two. Forget and forgive everything, and go on hand in hand towards the amelioration of our country. You two, in your youth, strength, and beauty, look at me, staggering meanly here before you. I have forgiven the wicked old past, which has brought me to this. Forgive you, in like manner, and cast no words abroad about Cavalier and Roundhead, about Defoe and Sacheverell. Agree!"

Said old Mordaunt. "He is a worse speaker than I am; and I am bad enough." Yet, no. That strange little cripple, bad and illogical as his speech was, touched the heart of the assembled boys. His splendid head, superimposed on the shambling heap of bones, was striking enough; his rugged, almost inconsecutive, speech did the rest. When he cowered back, and lay once more on old Mordaunt's shoulder, the house was clamorous for a reconciliation between Roland and Lord Eustace Vanderbilt.

It was solemnly made. Roland and Lord Eustace shook hands, and Sir Jasper Meredith shrunk close to the shoulder of old Mordaunt, saying, "You did right to rouse him. But we shall never know the best of him; he has too much money."

CHAPTER XIX.

So began the end of the old *régime*. That was the very last glimpse that our boys had of a British university. They had been educated as rich boys are educated, at a public school and at a university. The time comes now, when, by a series of accidents, they were cast into the world. Will you bear with me while I sum up their qualifications for fighting that same world?

Roland. With regard to Roland's rowing, there has never been, I believe, but one opinion. It was unapproachable. Roland rowed before the new art of "catching" the water at the beginning of your stroke, and rowing so many strokes a minute, came in fashion. Roland rowed like Coombes, his master; diligently observing the rule to "catch" nothing, but to imitate, as far as possible, the motion of a

steam-engine. Roland, with his Maynard and his Mordaunt between him, and Eddy steering, won everything. I only mention his rowing powers first, as a tribute to the genius of the age. I have now to descend to the unimportant fact of his scholarship.

I suppose I ought to apologize for doing anything so vulgar, or so commonplace. Yet we are a practical people, and the French say a money-loving people. Roland's education had cost the change out of £1,500 already. He had been the favourite boy of one of the most successful masters of modern times. He so far differed from the ordinary public school-boy of these times, that he could have got into Balliol, or taken his degree when he left school. It was not necessary for his father to spend £200 on a coach, before he could pass his matriculation, and another hundred before he could pass his "little go." He was a very favourable specimen. He could have competed with the head boys from Cheltenham or Marlborough, just then coming into existence, in classics. The question is—what did he know?

He could do a better piece of Greek prose

than, probably, any man in the House of Commons, in the Chamber of Deputies, or in Congress. His Greek prose was so good that there were scarcely two dozen men in England who could correct it. He could translate any Greek book, let it be what it would, elegantly and correctly. Erasmus and his friends, or Milton, were scarcely better classics at his age. He was a young lion. In the *vivâ voce* part of his examination, a middle-aged Moderator, fresh from the country, got frightened at him, and sought safety in flight. Roland, standing on the other side of that dreadful table in those divinity schools, there and then, under the most beautifully decorated roof in England, corrected and shut up that Moderator.

Then his "science." He could reel you off the limits of human knowledge. He could pick you out the few queer places in his Aldrich, and pour out the vials of his contempt over the "logic" of the late Archbishop of Dublin. At the Union he had got on his legs, and utterly demolished the "science" of Emerson, showing that he had not mastered the mere grammar of his art.

Then in divinity. He would as lief read you his Bible in Greek as in English, and had made numerous emendations in Pickering's notes. His essay on the miraculous draught of fishes, in which he clearly proved that they were Thymalli and not Cyprinidæ (in which he was quite wrong), was printed. And he could say half the articles by heart, including the somewhat difficult one on Predestination, which James Mordaunt called the article on Pedestrianism.

I have now come to the end of my hero's accomplishments. He was destined for Parliament, and would have educated himself there, and done well there. I acknowledge that he had learnt how to learn, and that when the world had shown him what it was necessary to know, that he would have learned it. But let me tell you what he did not know.

He knew nothing of the history of his own country. He could tell you of commonplaces about a Spartan Hegemony, but the Fox and North coalition was news to him. Before the catastrophe came, he had scarcely, from the most ordinary sources, put himself in posses-

sion of the most ordinary facts in English history.

About physical science he was absolutely and perfectly ignorant. For this we can scarcely blame him. Mr. Lewes, and another, whom family reasons prevent my naming, had not then brought science to our doors. Darwin and Huxley were watching the wonders of God in the deep sea, and had not got epitomized. Mrs. Sabine had not translated the *Cosmos*, which brings us to the fact that Roland was entirely unable to read the *Cosmos* in the original German. Not to mince matters, that he was practically ignorant of every modern language. He might have gone on the grand tour, and have come back not much wiser than he went. The bright, agreeable Frenchman, with his bright, half false ideas (always, however, containing a half truth), and the slow, wise German, were alike dumb dogs to him. Outside this small over-populated island of ours, the world was a dead black blank to him: those very admirable fellows, Fritz and Alphonse, having no language to speak to him but that of the eyes. If you turn on me and say that

Fritz and Alphonse might have taken the trouble to learn the language of Shakespeare, I can only retort that they did not and will not. I also ask you whether, after the above summing-up of Roland's accomplishments, Squire Evans got his money's worth (£1,500) for his money? I say that he did not.

Suppose Roland stripped of his wealth, what was he fit for? For my own part, I shall soon get near to believing that the Cornell "University" in the United States, or the Oxford, or still more, the Cambridge of Chaucer, is the best in the world. And now, when we have broken through tradition in every way, just conceive what we might make of our young men on the "Cornell" principle, with the Oxford and Cambridge revenues. But our purpose is to write a story, and this is past it. Let me come back to my proposition. Roland, after £1,500 of expenditure, was little fit to cope with the world, as far as education had helped him.

In one moment, see what the Oxford and Cambridge of Chaucer were, not as bearing in

any trifling opinions of mine, but in showing for the mere sake of five minutes' amusement, how each university has kept its character through so many centuries, at all events, in the public mind. What are the popular opinions about Cambridge now? The ideal Cambridge man is plodding, thrifty, quiet, diligent, solemn, wise. The ideal Oxford man is fantastic, noisy, extravagant, and given to practical jokes. Most of the "Joe Millers" for many years are laid at the door of "Oxford students." Just compare the ideal Oxford man of the day with the ideal Oxford man of Chaucer, as compared with his Cambridge man, and see how true it comes after so many centuries. Compare Allan and John, the Cambridge lads, who carried the wheat to Trumpington, with Hendy Nicholas and Soloman, the Oxford lads; and Allan also was a Scotchman (we have had a senior wrangler or so from that kingdom of late years, I believe); and was there ever such an Oxford man as Soloman? His love for gaudry, his love for private theatricals, with an easy part and a fine dress. That inimitable

Chaucer makes him act Herod. "Nothing to say and a fine dress—Tory Oxford all over," says a cynical Cambridge friend.

And of the others, what can be said? they were but little more prepared for the world than he. Had they been put to the test of competitive examination, they would have been found fit for nothing but ushers in schools or curates. Clive, or Hastings, were not more ignorant, or more helpless, before they underwent that great competitive sink-or-swim examination, which is called The World.

CHAPTER XX.

As the time for the great wedding, which once again was to unite the rather often united houses of Evans and Maynard, drew near, some of those connected with the preparations noticed that there would be two rather conspicuous absentees. Young James Mordaunt had suddenly discovered that his whole heart was set on trying for the Engineers, and, failing that, getting into the Artillery; and in a letter to his father, urged the necessity of going to Bonn to study at once.

The request was so very sudden and odd, that Squire Mordaunt wrote to his eldest son to consult him about the matter, and to beg him to see if Jim was in earnest. The result was, that the two brothers were closeted together, and the elder Mordaunt looked very grave and vexed when they parted. John Mordaunt wrote to his father very curtly, to say that he thought

it would be much better if James was allowed to go to Bonn at Christmas instead of coming home. He could give no reasons, he said, but he had got his brother's leave to put the case before Roland Evans, and Roland Evans had agreed with him. Squire Mordaunt gave his consent wonderingly; and Eddy Evans noticed that from this time his brother Roland and John Mordaunt treated James Mordaunt with a rather solemn kindness and respect, which they had never exhibited before.

There were no sky-larking and folly now. Jim was the most solemn and miserable of the group. He got up a fiction that his health was bad, and that there was something the matter with his heart; poor boy! there *was*. Something past mending.

Eddy fell in popularity this autumn. Seeing every one (except Maynard) very low in their minds, he would play the fool to cheer them up; but no one wanted the fool played, and all the old babyish balderdash fell dead. For fun is a good enough thing in its way, and in its time, and is very like the flower called "*Gazanea*," or "*Dame d'onze heures*," a flower which,

under the morning's cold, is no flower at all, but an ugly bud ; but which, under the eleven o'clock sun, spreads out into a golden corona studded with pearls. Who knows it better than a story-teller ? There has been fun of a sort in this story. How different it must look to a man without a care, and to a critic, reading the story in a perfunctory manner. I know a man who was highly complimented once, by probably the best judge of humour in England, on a passage in his novel. That identical passage was ticketed the very next week in one of the leading reviews, by the best critic we have, as pointless and degrading balderdash. What had pleased the one had utterly disgusted the other, yet they were both fine judges. Thackeray, master of humour, says distinctly that what some think a mass of rather ugly stupidity, is the most amusing book ever written ;* and, under any circumstances, jokes fall dead sometimes. No wonder that Eddy's babyish folly fell dead on the ears of men so deeply anxious as Roland Evans and the elder Mordaunt.

For a very ugly thing had happened. I have,

* Humphrey Clinker.

I hope, not concealed from you the character of the younger Mordaunt. You remember the frightful bullying of poor little Eddy Evans by him, and have known that there was a wild beast vein in him somewhere. Say, if you like, that the Evanses and the Mordaunts had been crossed too often, and were beginning to show the true symptoms of the decadence of a family by a stupid, blind petulance in the males. Draw a parallel with racehorses, if you like. Blue Mantle or D'Estournel for instance. Account for it as you will, the fact remains the same. That splendid young man, James Mordaunt, tamed now for five years by fear of death and by gratitude to Roland, had broken out again. He had fallen in love, it seems, with Mildred Evans; and to Roland and to his brother John he talked of murder and suicide in the maddest manner.

To such steady-going stage-coaches as John Mordaunt and Roland Evans this was simply horrible. They, in their utter ignorance of physics, thought that this excitability of brain was permanent. It terrified them more than it need have done. How could they guess or know

that the mad ferocity of the latest European cross of blood frequently went Berserk at the time of the most rapid physical development? Who was there to tell them that the Prussian duellist student, as soon as he moves his chair to his bureau, becomes the most quiet of men, a little haughty, perhaps, but a good fellow; or that that brown-faced gentleman who asks your opinion on a point in croquet, has been mad once, and elbow-deep in Indian blood? Had they ever seen a private of Pelissier's Algerian division boiling beans and giving a baby bonbons? No. These lads knew nothing of these things. But poor James was pronounced mad, and was sent to Bonn.

Sir Jasper Meredith might have come, but his conduct was as crooked as his limbs. Mr. Evans asked him, and he wrote to Roland to refuse. He wrote, I am sorry to say, a very petulant and impertinent letter. "I shall not come," he said. "Now matters are come to a point, I am not sure that I am pleased. Your sister has had little or no choice in this matter. Who can be sure that she would have chosen Robert Maynard at all if she had had any one

else to choose? I hate this kind of marriage beyond measure. Before either of them know their own minds, they bind themselves to live for at least fifty years together, barring accidents. It is not at all a wise arrangement, and I am going to stay with Jimmy at Bonn."

Roland showed this letter, in a state of white fury, to John Mordaunt. "The ill-tempered little fellow," he said, "to write me such a letter as that: I have it in my heart to beat him."

"He is a cranky little chap," said ox Mordaunt. "And it is no business of his, which makes his letter a piece of cool impertinence, which you ought certainly to resent. But I don't know. No man in this world ever speaks decidedly, unless there is some grain of truth in what he says. I ain't positive of many things, but I am positive of that. Why, the very telegrams themselves begin, 'It is asserted,' or something of that sort, to let you down easy. Meredith is positive in this matter as far as he dare be. I doubt he knows something."

"Do you mean to say that you agree with Meredith?" asked Roland.

"No," said Mordaunt, "not exactly. But

I wish the engagement had been a longer one : that is all. When little Meredith says that they don't know their own minds, I agree with him. It is a boy-and-girl match, and may turn out well or ill. It is all a toss up."

"The women of our family always make good wives," said Roland.

"Your *family!*" said old Mordaunt. "You are, like ourselves, crossed with half the blood in Shropshire, and, like ourselves, you have produced no great sire who could leave his mark in the family, like the horse Tadmor, for generations. You Evanses, certainly, don't breed true. Look at Eddy. He is no more your brother than I am. And the bride, she is not your sister, she is Eddy's. Don't talk to me about your family. Is your family capable of fierce rabid vindictiveness?"

"Certainly not," said Roland. "Look at our history."

"You haven't got any history," said old Mordaunt. "You have never produced a distinguished man, before yourself. So your family is incapable of vindictive ferocity? Why, man, that vagabond poor brother of mine, Jim, used

to leather and pound Eddy, and I have thrashed him for it ; and whilst I have been thrashing my brother, I have been glad that your little kitten of a brother had not had a knife in his hand when my brother was bullying him. And Mildred is his sister, not yours."

"You put matters rather coarsely, old fellow," said Roland.

"I am a brute I doubt. Where you got your refinement from, in the atmosphere of this valley, I can't think. It is suffocating me. To wind up all in a downright manner, I hope everything will go right. Bob Maynard is a good fellow, not without brains; but upon my soul I wish they both had more time to look about them. In the name of heaven, what is there to prevent him, when he gets into the world, finding a woman he likes better than your sister? That would be death to her."

"Then love will last unto death," said Roland.

"How do you know that? Who told you that? You have had a fancy for more than one woman, have you not?"

"Certainly not," said Roland, promptly; "I never had a fancy for any woman in my life.

By-the-by, do you mean little Mary Maynard? Well, I like her about as well as I do your brother Jim."

There was something contemptuous in old Mordaunt's voice, when he growled out, "Then you are more lucky than most men. For my own part, I am not made of the same stuff that you are. I can sum up three girls that I would have gone to the devil for in the last three years. But I have changed, and hurt no one. Suppose Bob Maynard was to change?"

"He can't change after he is married," said Roland.

"No, you are right there," said old Mordaunt, "that is just the very thing he can't do."

"Well, don't go on," said Roland; and so old Mordaunt left off.

It was strange to Roland that this very wedding, a splendid affair altogether—a marriage which united two considerable estates, and which brought youth, beauty, and wealth together in such a singular manner—was objected to by the very people he thought would approve of it most. The vague, bucolic elder Mordaunt had scarcely finished his illogical

lowings over it, and had not yet reached his father's house across the valley in the dark, nay, even had walked into the trout-stream, and was still swearing, when Aunt Eleanor came into the room where Roland was sitting, and told him, as a piece of good news, that Mildred was quite quiet now.

“What the devil has the girl got to be unquiet about?”

“I don't know,” said Aunt Eleanor, who, in spite of her farming and shooting, was as thorough a woman as ever walked. That is to say, when anything happened she would accuse the nearest man of it on the spot, and leave him to get out of the scrape the best way he could. “I don't know what she has to be unquiet about, but she is perfectly quiet now, and seems inclined to sleep.”

“Have you been worrying her in any way?”

“I haven't said a word to her. What do you mean?”

“I'd *sleep* her,” said the exasperated Roland. “Why, she is going to marry the man of her own choice to-morrow. She must be an idiot.”

“We are all idiots, we women,” said Aunt

Eleanor. "We know it, my dear. That is the worst of it. Mildred is an idiot. But she has been in a state of strong nervous excitement all day, and is comparatively quiet now."

"But you did not make such a fool of yourself when you were married, Aunt."

"My dear, I never was married," said Aunt Eleanor, quietly; "your memory is going with study, my dear."

This so took the wind out of Roland's sails that he had to start on a fresh tack.

"Aunt Eleanor, I beg your pardon. But I want to ask you something; would you postpone this marriage if you could? Old Mordaunt has been gandering here, and has just gone home in the dark, swearing. Now, would you postpone this marriage if you could?"

"Yes," said Aunt Eleanor. "Good night."

So she went to bed. And Roland, who, in his unapproachable purism, is about as good a hero as a bean-stalk or a punt-pole, sat before the fire and wondered why the deuce people couldn't marry one another without all this botheration.

END OF VOL. 1.

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